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The Essential Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru

edited by S. GOPAL • UMA IYENGAR

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THE ESSENTIAL WRITINGS OF
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

This anthology of Jawaharlal Nehru's writings includes nearly 500 extracts covering almost every aspect of his life and times.

Jawaharlal Nehru was an eloquent and prolific communicator. The felicity with which he expressed himself was rare, and the range of his interests remarkable. His early writings were dominated by the nationalist impulse with issues of nation-building, the 'idea of India', and Mahatma Gandhi as enduring themes. Nehru was also profoundly influenced by the socialist philosophy of society, and believed it would help in the creation of a secular, egalitarian and democratic India.

In addition to his political writings, Nehru wrote extensively on a wide variety of subjects. His love for nature is evocatively captured in his musings on wildlife and environment. His quest for knowledge of India's past, and the traditions and cultures that flowed together to make the nation's essence bear testimony to his keen sense of history.

Nehru was deeply perturbed by natural disasters like earthquakes and famines that ravaged his country and brought hardship to his people. He strongly advocated the development of science and technology which he believed would form the basis for ushering in an age of modernity.

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THE ESSENTIAL WRITINGS OF

Jawaharlal Nehru

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VOLUME I

Edited by

S. GOPAL

UMA IYENGAR

OXFORD

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To the memory of
DR SARVEPALLI GOPAL

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Preface

> Do not imagine that thought is an easy matter or that its consequences are trivial. Thought is not and should not be afraid of the wrath of heaven or the terrors of hell. It is the most revolutionary thing on earth.*

Jawaharlal Nehru was an eloquent and prolific communicator. He wrote extensively, and spoke even more, for over fifty years, spanning the birth of a nation. He is reputed to have averaged twenty-five speeches a month apart from those that he gave in Parliament, which were at times gargantuan.

If volume of publication were the only criterion, then there are others who have surpassed Nehru. But the felicity with which he expressed himself was (and is) rare, and the range of subjects of his scrutiny even more remarkable. Add to this the fact that he was one of the most influential individuals in a period of enormous change, and the anthologist's task becomes formidable.

The selections in these volumes are chosen to reflect Jawaharlal Nehru's thought as his intellect expressed itself on a diversity of topics, from the drafting of the Constitution to horse breeding, from patriarchy to the size and shape of brooms. The excerpts chosen are an attempt to present a composite picture of this public figure through his writings and speeches. Therefore, official statements of policy and documents that merely transmit his point of view have been largely set aside. But some utterances, which are of more than individual significance, have been included. In later life, trying to balance between ever-increasing problems of governance and the desire to be part of his beloved millions he tends to be repetitive and sometimes disjointed.

While historians, and other students of those times will find much of interest in these volumes, it is the anthologist's hope that some, at least, will read on for the sheer joy of the language.

Nehru's command over the English language stemmed from the nature of his education. His writings are replete with quotations and allusions. While later he strengthened his Hindi, to communicate with the masses, he admits to approaching India from the West and viewing her as a friendly European would. He was impatient to change her outlook and appearance and give her a garb of modernity. Before setting out on this mammoth task, he wanted to

*27 September 1928. Presidential address at the All-Bengal Students Conference.

acquire a holistic perspective of her past, present and future. Towards that end, he visited historical sites like Mohenjodaro, Sarnath, old monuments, ruins and sculptures, participated in mass events like the *kumbh mela*, read the history of five thousand years and the ancient literatures. This gave him an insight into the past, thus equipping him to the understanding of the present-day reality of subjugation and poverty and to the shaping of the future.

The only son of Motilal Nehru, an affluent barrister, Jawaharlal Nehru was educated at home with tutors and governesses. Motilal Nehru, who lived the life of an English gentleman, sent his son to England, with the ultimate objective of qualifying for the Bar. After seven years spent at Harrow, Cambridge and the Inner Temple, Jawaharlal Nehru returned to India in 1912, 'a bit of a prig with little to commend me'.

The fire and passion that characterized Nehru the freedom fighter and Prime Minister were not much in evidence at this time. He fell into the pattern of upper middle class societal life, joined his father's chambers and married Kamala, who was chosen by his father.

The expulsion and internment of Annie Besant roused Jawaharlal Nehru's dormant feelings. He wrote a biting and sarcastic letter to the Editor (21 June, 1917, *The Leader*), that the time for protest meetings and eloquent speeches was past, for 'ours has been the politics of cowards and opium eaters, and it is time we thought and acted like men and women'. This transformation was reinforced by the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh.

Whatever the contrast between Nehru *ante* and *post* 1917, many of the themes that were to dominate his thinking as Prime Minister, were evident in the early stages of his political career. He began conceptualizing the form of a free India in the 1920s, nearly thirty years before Independence. He believed the exercise was fundamental to the struggle that Indians had undertaken, even though:

> To some it may appear . . . this is a most unsuitable time for planning, which is essentially a labour of peaceful cooperation . . . [since] on what foundation shall we build, when no man can foretell what that foundation will be?

His reasons for taking the contrarian position were powerful and cogent:

> [yet] these very considerations lead us to a contrary conclusion. For it is the very time of change and uncertainty that demands mental activity and a vision of the future that we desire. If we are mere onlookers now, and passive and helpless agents of circumstance or the will of others, we barter away our claim to that future. Instead of preparing for it, we hand the reins to others. . . . A period of . . . dynamic change . . . demands . . . the planned activity of the mind so that . . . [this] may be translated with all speed into the planned activity of the nation.

While delineating his belief in the socialist structure of Indian society, and admitting the centrality of economics in the future of India, Nehru adumbrated the key role that he perceived foreign policy would play in the development of the nation. For Arnold Toynbee, Nehru was a pioneer in taking nothing less than the world itself as the field for his public activity. As with social development, he took thought for India's role in the world in 1927. Understanding world movements, and fashioning India's movements accordingly, was the guiding principle that he used in this conception.

If Nehru as a nation-builder was evident in the early political writings, the passion of his heart and mind lent a living cadence to his musings on two great themes: Gandhi, and the 'idea of India'.

Both ideas—for Gandhi was as much an idea, as a personality—moved Nehru profoundly, without his feelings ever descending to sentimentality. Gandhi was:

> [the] quintessence of the conscious and subconscious will of the [peasant masses] of India . . . the idealized personification of those vast millions . . . a man of the keenest intellect, of fine feeling and good taste, wide vision . . . the ascetic . . . and yet withal he is the great peasant

Nevertheless the 'great peasant' could not evade the wit of a liberal-minded Nehru. Political disputes aside, Nehru's views, on Gandhian morality, were passionate yet tempered by his indulgence of a great man (with a few quirks). On Gandhi's belief that 'artificial means' to prevent conception were dangerous for health, his disciple claimed that 'if [Gandhi] is right, then I am a criminal on the verge of imbecility and nervous prostration'. But his epitaph for Gandhi, on the day when the 'light went out', remains as poignant as on the cold foggy Delhi winter day when it was newly minted.

Nehru loved India not merely for her greatness, and not because he had cultivated the idolatry of geography. The country '. . . with all her infinite charm and variety began to grow upon me more and more . . . she was like some ancient palimpsest on which layer upon layer of thought and reverie had been inscribed and yet no succeeding layer had completely hidden or erased what had been previously written'.

He served several prison terms and spent a total of five and a half years in jail. From the narrow confines of his prison cell his mind traversed the centuries, travelled through continents. Partly to occupy himself with a definitive task, a disciplined method of alleviating the long hours of solitude, and partly out of the desire to educate his daughter to grow up to be a cultured individual with an awareness and an understanding of the world he wrote the *Glimpses of World History* and *The Discovery of India*.

By 1945, however, the inevitability of partition was becoming ominously evident. Pakistan was created accompanied by communal frenzy, blood and

tears, and 'worse than the blood and tears was the shame and disgrace that accompanied it'. The jubilation at the country's tryst with destiny was overshadowed by a 'creeping sense of horror, the odour of death, a smell of blood and of burning flesh'.

And through it all, in the living history of the man and the nation, was Kashmir. Nehru found it difficult to speak of Kashmir in the voice of the Government of India and more often than not the emotions of Jawaharlal prevailed. His descriptions of Kashmir and the river Ganga verge on the lyrical.

Jawaharlal Nehru's legacy to India and the world continues to be a matter of controversy. That debate is, perhaps, a necessary consequence of the man's impact, but it is not the essence of the man. He was, by his own admission, a 'practising politician' who loved 'mountains and glaciers, running water in the hills, lettuce salad and good conversation, animals and flowers, swimming and riding'. Who along with 'bats and centipedes disliked the person who in the name of God, truth and public good is always feathering his nest'.

Anyone—detractor or Boswellian—who seeks to examine Nehru's impact must, at the very least, understand Nehru as he understood himself. This is a challenging, but pleasurable task, for that understanding is of a 'lover of words and phrases', who stated his opinions elegantly, and sought the voice of reason.

Working with Dr Gopal, in the ambience of Teen Murti, where Jawahar - lal Nehru lived, has been a great honour and privilege. He has been the driving force behind the *Essential Writings*, and it is a matter of great regret that, although the work was completed in his lifetime, he has not lived to see its publication.

30 January 2003

UMA IYENGAR

Jawaharlal Nehru: A Chronology

1889	Born 14 November in Allahabad, the son of Motilal and Swaruprani Nehru.
1905–7	Harrow School, Harrow-on-the-Hill, Middlesex.
1097–10	Trinity College, Cambridge.
1910–12	Inner Temple, London.
1912	Returned to India. Lawyer, Allahabad High Court.
1913	Joint Secretary, Allahabad branch of St John Ambulance Brigade.
1916	Married, 8 February, Kamala Kaul.
1917	Joined Home Rule League. Daughter, Indira, born 19 November.
1918	Secretary, Home Rule League.
1919	Started the newspaper, *Independent*, with Motilal Nehru.
1920	Joined the noncooperation movement.
1921	Arrested 6 December for participating in the Volunteer Movement and urging the boycott of the visit of the Prince of Wales to India.
1922	Released 3 March. Arrested 11 May for picketing cloth shops.
1923	Released 26 January. Elected April Chairman, Allahabad Municipal Board. (Resigned January 1925.) Arrested 19 September for defying an order banning entry into Nabha State. (Released 6 October.) Presided, October, over the United Provinces Political Conference, Benares. Founded, December, the Hindustani Seva Dal, General Secretary, Indian National Congress, 1923–5.
1926–7	Visited Europe and Britain. Attended 10 February 1927 the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities, Brussels. Visited, November, the Soviet Union. Moved, December, the 'Independence Resolution' at the Madras session of the Indian National Congress. General Secretary, Indian National Congress, 1927–9.

1928 Presided April over the Punjab Provincial Conference. Founded in August the Independence for India League. Presided September over the All Bengal Students Conference. Active in the boycott of the Simon Commission; lathi-charged November, Lucknow.

1929 Presided 30 November over the Nagpur session of the All-India Trade Union Congress. Presided 29 December over the Lahore session of the Indian National Congress.

1930 Participated in the Salt Satyagraha Movement and arrested 14 April. (Released 11 October.) Arrested 19 October for speech made in favour of the no-tax campaign.

1931 Released 26 January. Motilal Nehru died 6 February. Arrested 26 December for breach of an internment order prohibiting him from leaving the municipal limits of Allahabad. (Released 30 August 1933).

1934 Organized January relief for the victims of the Bihar earthquake. Arrested 12 February for speeches made in Calcutta. (Released 11 August on parole.) Returned 23 August to prison. (Released 4 September 1935).

1936 Kamala Nehru died 28 February in Lausanne, Switzerland. Presided 23 April over the Lucknow session of the Indian National Congress. Travelled April-December round India campaigning on behalf of Congress candidates for the General Elections. Presided 27 December over the Faizpur session of the Indian National Congress.

1938 Swaruprani Nehru died in January. Visited Spain, France, Britain and some other European countries. Chairman, National Planning Committee.

1939 Visited Sri Lanka and China. Drafted the Congress resolution on the war.

1940 Chosen to be the second satyagrahi in the Individual Satyagraha Movement. Arrested 31 October for speeches made in Gorakhpur. (Released 4 December 1941.)

1942 Negotiations March April with Sir Stafford Cripps. Moved 7 August the 'Quit India' resolution at the All-India Congress Committee meeting. Arrested 9 August.

1945 Released 15 June. Represented 25 June–14 July the Congress at the Simla Conference. Campaigned for Congress candidates in the elections. Appeared November as a lawyer for the defence at the trial of the Indian National Army Officers. Vice-President, Indian Centre of the P.E.N. Elected December President of the All India States People's Conference.

1946 Visited March South-east Asia. Held April-June talks with members of the British Cabinet Mission. Elected May President of the Indian National Congress. (Resigned in September.) Trip June to Kashmir, arrest and release. Interim government formed 2 September with Nehru as Vice-President of the Viceroy's Executive Council and member for External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations. Moved 13 December the 'Objectives Resolution' in the Constituent Assembly.

1947 Inaugurated 23 March the Asian Relations Conference, New Delhi. Broadcast 3 June to the nation accepting the partition proposals. Became 15 August first Prime Minister of free India.

1948 Mahatma Gandhi died 30 January. Attended October the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference, London. Addressed 3 November the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly, Paris.

1949 Inaugurated 20 January the conference of eighteen nations to condemn Dutch aggression on Indonesia. First visit October–November to the U.S.A. and Canada.

1950 India became a Republic 26 January. Became (March) Chairman, Planning Commission. (Held this office till his death.)

1951 Elected President, Indian National Congress. (Continued till 1954.)

1952 Formed May new government after the first General Elections. Began 2 October Community Development Programme.

1953 Chief Ministers' Conference November, New Delhi. Appointed December States Reorganization Commission.

1954 Chou En-lai visited India. Issued June joint statement of the Prime Ministers of India and China, listing the five principles (Panchsheel) for the regulation of relations between nations.

1955 Moved January the resolution on a 'Socialistic Pattern of Society' at the Avadi session of the Indian National Congress. Afro-Asian Conference, Bandung, 15–25 April.

1956 Conference 17–18 July with President Nasser of Egypt and President Tito of Yugoslavia, Brioni. Conference November of the Prime Ministers of Indonesia, Burma, Ceylon and India, New Delhi.

1957 Formed April new government after the second General Elections.

1959 Sponsored January resolution on cooperative farming and state trading of food grains at the Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress.

1960 Addressed 3 October the United Nations General Assembly, New York.

1961 Conference of Non-aligned Nations, Belgrade, September.

1962 Formed April new government after the third General Elections. Presided June over the National Integration Council meeting. State of Emergency proclaimed 26 October by the President of India following the Chinese aggression.

1963 'Kamraj Plan'—ministers relinquished office to reorganize the Congress Party.

1964 Died 27 May in New Delhi. Cremated at what is now Shanti Vana on the banks of the Yamuna.

MAJOR WORKS

Soviet Russia (1928)

Letters from a Father to His Daughter (1930)

Window in Prison and Prisonland (1933)

Glimpses of World History (1934), Asia Publishing House.

An Autobiography (1936), John Lane, The Bodley Head Ltd., London.

India and the World (1936), Allen & Unwin, London.

Eighteen Months in India (1938)

China, Spain and the War (1940), Kitabistan, Allahabad and London.

The Unity of India (1941)

The Discovery of India (1946), The Signet Press, Calcutta.

A Bunch of Old Letters (1958), Asia Publishing House.

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1

The Panorama of India's Past[1]

As I grew up and became engaged in activities which promised to lead to India's freedom, I became obsessed with the thought of India. What was this India that possessed me and beckoned to me continually, urging me to action so that we might realize some vague but deeply-felt desire of our hearts? The initial urge came to me, I suppose, through pride, both individual and national, and the desire, common to all men, to resist another's domination and have freedom to live the life of our choice. It seemed monstrous to me that a great country like India, with a rich and immemorial past, should be bound hand and foot to a far-away island which imposed its will upon her. It was still more monstrous that this forcible union had resulted in poverty and degradation beyond measure. That was reason enough for me and others to act.

But it was not enough to satisfy the questioning that arose within me. What is this India, apart from her physical and geographical aspects? What did she represent in the past? What gave strength to her then? How did she lose that old strength? And has she lost it completely? Does she represent anything vital now, apart from being the home of a vast number of human beings? How does she fit into the modern world?

This wider international aspect of the problem grew upon me as I realized more and more how isolation was both undesirable and impossible. The future that took shape in my mind was one of intimate cooperation, politically, economically, and culturally, between India and the other countries of the world. But before the future came there was the present, and behind the present lay the long and tangled past, out of which the present had grown. So to the past I looked for understanding.

India was in my blood and there was much in her that instinctively thrilled me. And yet I approached her almost as an alien critic, full of dislike for the present as well as for many of the relics of the past that I saw. To some extent I came to her via the West, and looked at her as a friendly westerner might have done. I was eager and anxious to change her outlook and appearance and give her the garb of modernity. And yet doubts arose within me. Did I know

[1] From *The Discovery of India*, pp. 49–52.

India?—I who presumed to scrap much of her past heritage? There was a great deal that had to be scrapped, that must be scrapped; but surely India could not have been what she undoubtedly was, and could not have continued a cultured existence for thousands of years, if she had not possessed something very vital and enduring, something that was worthwhile. What was this something?

I stood on a mound of Mohenjo-daro in the Indus Valley in the north-west of India, and all around me lay the houses and streets of this ancient city that is said to have existed over five thousand years ago; and even then it was an old and well-developed civilization. 'The Indus civilization,' writes Professor Childe,[2] 'represents a very perfect adjustment of human life to a specific environment that can only have resulted from years of patient effort. And it has endured; it is already specifically Indian and forms the basis of modern Indian culture.' Astonishing thought: that any culture or civilization should have this continuity for five or six thousand years or more; and not in a static, unchanging sense, for India was changing and progressing all the time. She was coming into intimate contact with the Persians, the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Chinese, the Arabs, the Central Asians, and the peoples of the Mediterranean. But though she influenced them and was influenced by them, her cultural basis was strong enough to endure. What was the secret of this strength? Where did it come from?

I read her history and read also a part of her abundant ancient literature, and was powerfully impressed by the vigour of the thought, the clarity of the language, and the richness of the mind that lay behind it. I journeyed through India in the company of mighty travellers from China and Western and Central Asia who came here in the remote past and left records of their travels. I thought of what India had accomplished in Eastern Asia, in Angkor, Borobudur, and many other places. I wandered over the Himalayas, which are closely connected with old myth and legend, and which have influenced so much our thought and literature. My love of the mountains and my kinship with Kashmir especially drew me to them, and I saw there not only the life and vigour and beauty of the present, but also the memoried loveliness of ages past. The mighty rivers of India that flow from this great mountain barrier into the plains of India attracted me and reminded me of innumerable phases of our history. The Indus or *Sindhu*, from which our country came to be called India and Hindustan, and across which races and tribes and caravans and armies have come for thousands of years; the Brahmaputra, rather cut off from the main current of history, but living in old story, forcing its way into India through deep chasms cut in the heart of the north-eastern mountains, and then flowing calmly in a gracious sweep between mountain and wooded plain; the Jumna, around which cluster so many legends of dance and fun and play; and the Ganges, above all the river

[2] V. Gordon Childe (1892–1957). Australian born British historian.

of India, which has held India's heart captive and drawn uncounted millions to her banks since the dawn of history. The story of the Ganges, from her source to the sea, from old times to new, is the story of India's civilization and culture, of the rise and fall of empires, of great and proud cities, of the adventure of man and the quest of the mind which has so occupied India's thinkers, of the richness and fulfilment of life as well as its denial and renunciation, of ups and downs, of growth and decay, of life and death.

I visited old monuments and ruins and ancient sculptures and frescoes—Ajanta, Ellora, the Elephanta Caves, and other places—and I also saw the lovely buildings of a later age in Agra and Delhi, where every stone told its story of India's past.

In my own city of Allahabad or in Hardwar I would go to the great bathing festivals, the *Kumbh Mela*, and see hundreds of thousands of people come, as their forebears had come for thousands of years from all over India, to bathe in the Ganges. I would remember descriptions of these festivals written thirteen hundred years ago by Chinese pilgrims and others, and even then these *melas* were ancient and lost in an unknown antiquity. What was the tremendous faith, I wondered, that had drawn our people for untold generations to this famous river of India?

These journeys and visits of mine, with the background of my reading, gave me an insight into the past. To a somewhat bare intellectual understanding was added an emotional appreciation, and gradually a sense of reality began to creep into my mental picture of India, and the land of my forefathers became peopled with living beings, who laughed and wept, loved and suffered; and among them were men who seemed to know life and understand it, and out of their wisdom they had built a structure which gave India a cultural stability which lasted for thousands of years. Hundreds of vivid pictures of this past filled my mind, and they would stand out as soon as I visited a particular place associated with them. At Sarnath, near Benares, I would almost see the Buddha preaching his first sermon, and some of his recorded words would come like a distant echo to me through two thousand five hundred years. Ashoka's pillars of stone with their inscriptions would speak to me in their magnificent language and tell me of a man who, though an emperor, was greater than any king or emperor. At Fatehpur-Sikri, Akbar, forgetful of his empire, was seated holding converse and debate with the learned of all faiths, curious to learn something new and seeking an answer to the eternal problem of man.

Thus slowly the long panorama of India's history unfolded itself before me, with its ups and downs, its triumphs and defeats. There seemed to me something unique about the continuity of a cultural tradition through five thousand years of history, of invasion and upheaval, a tradition which was widespread among the masses and powerfully influenced them. Only China has had such a continuity of tradition and cultural life. And this panorama of the past

gradually merged into the unhappy present, when India, for all her past greatness and stability, was a slave country, an appendage of Britain, and all over the world terrible and devastating war was raging and brutalizing humanity. But that vision of five thousand years gave me a new perspective, and the burden of the present years seemed to grow lighter.

2

Bharat Mata[1]

India with all her infinite charm and variety began to grow upon me more and more, and yet the more I saw of her, the more I realized how very difficult it was for me or for anyone else to grasp the ideas she had embodied. It was not her wide spaces that eluded me, or even her diversity, but some depth of soul which I could not fathom, though I had occasional and tantalizing glimpses of it. She was like some ancient palimpsest on which layer upon layer of thought and reverie had been inscribed, and yet no succeeding layer had completely hidden or erased what had been written previously. All of these existed in our conscious or subconscious selves, though we may not have been aware of them, and they had gone to build up the complex and mysterious personality of India. That sphinx-like face with its elusive and sometimes mocking smile was to be seen throughout the length and breadth of the land. Though outwardly there was diversity and infinite variety among our people, everywhere there was that tremendous impress of oneness, which had held all of us together for ages past, whatever political fate or misfortune had befallen us. The unity of India was no longer merely an intellectual conception for me: it was an emotional experience which overpowered me. That essential unity had been so powerful that no political division, no disaster or catastrophe, had been able to overcome it.

It was absurd, of course, to think of India or any country as a kind of anthropomorphic entity. I did not do so. I was also fully aware of the diversities and divisions of Indian life, of classes, castes, religions, races, different degrees of cultural development. Yet I think that a country with a long cultural background and a common outlook on life develops a spirit that is peculiar to it and that is impressed on all its children, however much they may differ among themselves. Can anyone fail to see this in China, whether he meets an old-fashioned mandarin or a Communist who has apparently broken with the past? It was this spirit of India that I was after, not through idle curiosity, though I was curious enough, but because I felt that it might give me some key to the understanding of my country and people, some guidance to thought and action. Politics and elections were day-to-day affairs when we grew excited over

[1] From *The Discovery of India*, pp. 58–61.

trumpery matters. But if we were going to build the house of India's future, strong and secure and beautiful, we would have to dig deep for the foundations.

Often, as I wandered from meeting to meeting, I spoke to my audience of this India of ours, Hindustan and of *Bharata*, the old Sanskrit name derived from the mythical founder of the race. I seldom did so in the cities, for there the audience were more sophisticated and wanted stronger fare. But to the peasant, with his limited outlook, I spoke of this great country for whose freedom we were struggling, of how each part differed from the other and yet was India, of common problems of the peasants from north to south and east to west, of the *Swaraj* that could only be for all and every part and not for some. I told them of my journeying from the Khyber Pass in the far north-west to Kanya Kumari or Cape Comorin in the distant south, and how everywhere the peasants put me identical questions, for their troubles were the same—poverty, debt, vested interests, landlords, moneylenders, heavy rents and taxes, police harassment, and all these wrapped up in the structure that the foreign government had imposed upon us—and relief must also come for all. I tried to make them think of India as a whole, and even to some little extent of this wide world of which we were a part. I brought in the struggle in China, in Spain, in Abyssinia, in Central Europe, in Egypt and the countries of Western Asia. I told them of the wonderful changes in the Soviet Union and of the great progress made in America. The task was not easy; yet it was not so difficult as I had imagined, for our ancient epics and myths and legends, which they knew so well, had made them familiar with the conception of their country, and there were always some who had travelled far and wide to the great places of pilgrimage situated at the four corners of India. Or there were old soldiers who had served in foreign parts in World War I or other expeditions. Even my references to foreign countries were brought home to them by the consequences of the great depression of the 'thirties.

Sometimes as I reached a gathering, a great roar of welcome would greet me: *Bharat Mata ki Jai*—'Victory to Mother India'. I would ask them unexpectedly what they meant by that cry, who was this Bharat Mata, Mother India, whose victory they wanted? My question would amuse them and surprise them, and then, not knowing exactly what to answer, they would look at each other and at me. I persisted in my questioning. At last a vigorous Jat, wedded to the soil from immemorial generations, would say that it was the *dharti*, the good earth of India, that they meant. What earth? Their particular village patch, or all the patches in the district or province, or in the whole of India? And so question and answer went on, till they would ask me impatiently to tell them all about it. I would endeavour to do so and explain that India was all this that they had thought, but it was much more. The mountains and the rivers of India, and the forests and the broad fields, which gave us food, were all dear to us, but what counted ultimately were the people of India, people like them and me,

who were spread out all over this vast land. Bharat Mata, Mother India, was essentially these millions of people, and victory to her meant victory to these people. You are parts of this Bharat Mata, I told them, you are in a manner yourselves Bharat Mata, and as this idea slowly soaked into their brains, their eyes would light up as if they had made a great discovery.

3

Kisans[1]

Early in June 1920 (so far as I can remember) about two hundred *kisans* marched fifty miles from the interior of Partabgarh district to Allahabad city with the intention of drawing the attention of the prominent politicians there to their woebegone condition. They were led by a man named Ramachandra, who himself was not a local peasant. I learnt that these kisans were squatting on the river bank, on one of the Jumna *ghats*, and, accompanied by some friends, went to see them. They told us about the crushing exactions of the taluqadars, of inhuman treatment, and that their condition had become wholly intolerable. They begged us to accompany them back to make inquiries as well as to protect them from the vengeance of the taluqadars who were angry at their having come to Allahabad on this mission. They would accept no denial and literally clung on to us. At last I promised to visit them two days or so later.

I went there with some colleagues and we spent three days in the villages far from the railway and even the *pucca* road. That visit was a revelation to me. We found the whole countryside afire with enthusiasm and full of a strange excitement. Enormous gatherings would take place at the briefest notice by word of mouth. One village would communicate with another, and the second with the third, and so on, and presently whole villages would empty out, and all over the fields there would be men and women and children on the march to the meeting-place. Or, more swiftly still, the cry of *Sita Ram—Sita Ra-a-a-a-m*—would fill the air, and travel far in all directions and be echoed back from other villages, and then people would come streaming out or even running as fast as they could. They were in miserable rags, men and women, but their faces were full of excitement and their eyes glistened and seemed to expect strange happenings which would, as if by a miracle, put an end to their long misery.

They showered their affection on us and looked on us with loving and hopeful eyes, as if we were the bearers of good tidings, the guides who were to lead them to the promised land. Looking at them and their misery and overflowing gratitude, I was filled with shame and sorrow, shame at my own easy-going and comfortable life and our petty politics of the city which ignored

[1] From *An Autobiography*, pp. 51–5.

this vast multitude of semi-naked sons and daughters of India, sorrow at the degradation and overwhelming poverty of India. A new picture of India seemed to rise before me, naked, starving, crushed, and utterly miserable. And their faith in us, casual visitors from the distant city, embarrassed me and filled me with a new responsibility that frightened me.

I listened to their innumerable tales of sorrow, their crushing and ever-growing burden of rent, illegal exactions, ejectments from land and mud hut, beatings; surrounded on all sides by vultures who preyed on them—zamindar's agents, money-lenders, police: toiling all day to find that what they produced was not theirs and their reward was kicks and curses and a hungry stomach. Many of those who were present were landless people who had been ejected by the landlords, and had no land or hut to fall back upon. The land was rich but the burden on it was very heavy, the holdings were small and there were too many people after them. Taking advantage of this land hunger the landlords, unable under the law to enhance their rents beyond a certain percentage, charged huge illegal premiums. The tenant, knowing of no other alternative, borrowed money from the money-lender and paid the premium, and then, unable to pay his debt or even the rent, was ejected and lost all he had.

This process was an old one and the progressive pauperization of the peasantry had been going on for a long time. What had happened to bring matters to a head and rouse up the countryside? Economic conditions, of course, but these conditions were similar all over Oudh, while the agrarian upheaval of 1920 and 1921 was largely confined to three districts—Partabgarh, Rae Bareli and Fyzabad. . . .

Oudh was a particularly good area for an agrarian agitation. It was, and is, the land of the taluqadars—the 'Barons of Oudh' they call themselves—and the zamindari system at its worst flourished there. The exactions of the landlords were becoming unbearable and the number of landless labourers was growing. There was on the whole only one class of tenant and this helped united action.

India may be roughly divided into two parts—the zamindari area with its big landlords, and the area containing peasant proprietors, but there is a measure of overlapping. The three provinces of Bengal, Behar, and the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, form the zamindari area. The peasant proprietors are comparatively better off, although even their condition is often pitiable. The mass of the peasantry in the Punjab or Gujarat (where there are peasant proprietors) is far better off than the tenants of the zamindari areas. In the greater part of these zamindari areas there were many kinds of tenancies—occupancy tenants, non-occupancy tenants, sub-tenancies, etc. The interests of various tenants often conflict against each other and this militates against joint action. In Oudh, however, there were no occupancy tenants or even life tenants in 1920. There were only short-term tenants who were continually being ejected in favour of someone who was willing to pay a higher premium. Because

there was principally one class of tenant, it was easier to organize them for joint action.

In practice there was no guarantee in Oudh for even the short term of the contract. A landlord hardly ever gave a receipt for rent received, and he could always say that the rent had not been paid and eject the tenant, for whom it was impossible to prove the contrary. Besides the rent there were an extraordinary number of illegal exactions. In one *taluqa* I was told that there had been as many as fifty different kinds of such exactions. Probably this number was exaggerated but it is notorious how taluqadars often make their tenants pay for every special expenditure—a marriage in the family, cost of the son's education in foreign countries, a party to the Governor or other high official, a purchase of a car or an elephant. Indeed these exactions have got special names—*motrauna* (tax for purchase of motor), *hathauna* (tax for purchase of elephant), etc.

It was not surprising therefore that a big agrarian agitation should develop in Oudh. What was surprising to me then was that this should have developed quite spontaneously without any city help or intervention of politicians and the like. The agrarian movement was entirely separate from the Congress and it had nothing to do with the non-cooperation that was taking shape. Or perhaps, it will be more correct to say that both these wide-spread and powerful movement were due to the same fundamental causes. The peasantry had of course taken part in the great hartals that Gandhiji had proclaimed in 1919 and later his name was becoming a charm for the man in the village.

What amazed me still more was our total ignorance in the cities of this great agrarian movement. No newspaper had contained a line about it; they were not interested in rural areas. I realized more than ever how cut off we were from our people and how we lived and worked and agitated in a little world apart from them.

4

The Idea Behind India[1]

I write about the Idea, the Idea behind India, the vital spark which lighted up the civilization that grew up in this country, and, in varying degrees, continued to influence its people through historical ages. It sounds well and impressive, and yet does this mean anything definite and precise?

. . . . My approach has been that of a man of action. It is the call of action in the present that has compelled me to think of the past and the future—the past that inevitably controls and governs many of our activities, the future that we desire to shape. It is not good enough for us in India or elsewhere to blunder on from day to day without anchor or lighthouse. The terror of the present holds us and drains the energy of mind and body. We cannot escape that. Yet this very catastrophe which overwhelms us in the present makes it imperative for us to take a longer perspective. And so, unsuited as I am for the purpose, I must take to philosophizing.

I cannot forget the world and isolate myself in India. The fate of every country is linked up together now and success or failure will be their common lot. But I have to function more particularly in India and therefore I seek to understand India. That understanding is bound to be limited and will emphasize some aspects and ignore others. I can only put down my own reactions and draw certain conclusions from them which may have to be changed with further knowledge.

. . . This cultural inheritance of the ancient Indian past, as well as what followed it in later years, is not confined to any one race that inhabited India or came to it. It is the common heritage of all of us, to which every race in India contributed, though the governing and controlling impulse came from the earliest times at the very dawn of history. Indeed, so far as those very early times are concerned, when thought began and developed, it is the heritage of the human race and the world would be infinitely poorer without it. But we in India, whoever we may be, have a particular claim to it, for our forefathers created it and built it up on foundations strong enough to endure for thousands of years, and whether we are conscious of it or not, we are influenced by it still.

[1] Postcript to *An Autobiography*, 2 October 1941, Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, henceforth SWJN, Vol. 11, pp. 786–7. Excerpts.

This has nothing or very little to do with religious faith. Some of us may change that faith but the heritage remains ours; if we give it up or forget it or ignore it, it is we who suffer.

The religion of ancient Greece is no more, and the altars of its gods and goddesses attract no votaries. But the heritage of Greek culture lives and inspires us. Iran changed her religion but she still proudly looks back to her pre-Islamic culture and inheritance. In China the Taoist, the Confucian and the Buddhist melt into one another it is difficult to draw a line between them. The followers of Christianity and Islam in China, strong in their respective faiths, are stronger still in their devotion to China and her magnificent culture.

And we in India with this superb inheritance? Some of us have forgotten it or, not knowing it, speak lightly of it; or they mix up the mass of evil with the good and wish to discard both; and then to build a new house without the strong foundations that we already have. Yet some others, blinded by their passions of the moment, wish to discard and destroy and betray their ancient motherland which gave them birth and to which they owe so much. In forgetting India, the India that was and the India that is, they have forgotten themselves. If they denounce her and discard the precious and life-giving garment of her age-long culture, they go out naked into this world of storm and strife.

But India will carry on, as she has done for countless ages, and forge yet another synthesis between the past and present and between the varied elements that go to make her. Another spring will come after the winter of her suffering and degradation, and her culture will flower again in freedom and unity.

5

India's Sickness: Famine[1]

India was very sick, both in mind and body. While some people had prospered during the war, the burden on others had reached breaking point, and as an awful reminder of this came famine, a famine of vast dimensions affecting Bengal and east and south India. It was the biggest and most devastating famine in India during the past 170 years of British dominion, comparable to those terrible famines which occurred from 1766 to 1770 in Bengal and Bihar as an early result of the establishment of British rule. Epidemics followed, especially cholera and malaria, and spread to other provinces, and even today they are taking their toll of scores of thousands of lives. Millions have died of famine and disease and yet that spectre hovers over India and claims its victims.*

This famine unveiled the picture of India as it was below the thin veneer of the prosperity of a small number of people at the top—a picture of poverty and ugliness of British rule. That was the culmination and fulfilment of British rule in India. It was no calamity of nature or play of the elements that brought this famine, nor was it caused by actual war operations and enemy blockade. Every competent observer is agreed that it was a man-made famine which could have been foreseen and avoided. Everyone is agreed that there was amazing indifference, incompetence, and complacency shown by all the authorities concerned. Right up to the last moment, when thousands were dying daily in the public streets, famine was denied and references to it in the Press were suppressed by the censors. When *The Statesman,* newspaper of Calcutta, published

[1] From *The Discovery of India*, pp. 495–500.

*Estimates of the number of deaths by famine in Bengal in 1943–44 vary greatly. The Department of Anthropology of the Calcutta University carried out an extensive scientific survey of sample groups in the famine areas. They arrived at the figure of about 3,400,000 total deaths by famine in Bengal. It was also found that during 1943 and 1944, 46 per cent of the people of Bengal suffered from major diseases. Official figures of the Bengal Government, based largely on unreliable reports from village patwaris or headmen, gave a much lower figure. The official Famine Enquiry Commission, presided over by Sir John Woodhead, has come to the conclusion that about 1,500,000 deaths occurred in Bengal 'as a direct result of the famine and the epidemics which followed in its train'. All these figures relate to Bengal alone. Many other parts of the country also suffered from famine and epidemic diseases consequent upon it.

gruesome and ghastly pictures of starving and dying women and children in the streets of Calcutta, a spokesman of the Government of India, speaking officially in the central assembly, protested against the 'dramatization' of the situation; to him apparently it was a normal occurrence for thousands to die daily from starvation in India. Mr. Amery, of the India Office in London, distinguished himself especially by his denials and statements. And then, when it became impossible to deny or cloak the existence of widespread famine, each group in authority blamed some other group for it. The Government of India said it was the fault of the provincial government, which itself was merely a puppet government functioning under the Governor and through the civil service. They were all to blame, but most of all inevitably that authoritarian government which the Viceroy represented in his person and which could do what it chose anywhere in India. In any democratic or semi-democratic country such a calamity would have swept away all the governments concerned with it. Not so in India where everything continued as before.

Considered even from the point of view of the war, this famine took place in the very region which stood nearest to the theatre of war and possible invasion. A widespread famine and collapse of the economic structure would inevitably injure the capacity for defence and even more so for offence. Thus did the Government of India discharge its responsibility for India's defence and the prosecution of the war against the Japanese aggressors. Not scorched earth but scorched and starved and dead human beings by the million in this vital war area were the emblems of the policy that the Government had pursued.

Indian non-official organizations from all over the country did good work in bringing relief, and so did those efficient humanitarians, the Quakers of England. The central and provincial governments also at last woke up and realized the immensity of the crisis and the army was utilized in the relief operations. For the moment something was done to check the spread of famine and mitigate its after-effects. But the relief was temporary and those after-effects continue, and no one knows when famine may not descend again on an even worse scale. Bengal is broken up, her social and economic life shattered, and an enfeebled generation left as survivors.

While all this was happening and the streets of Calcutta were strewn with corpses, the social life of the upper ten thousand of Calcutta underwent no change. There was dancing and feasting and a flaunting of luxury, and life was gay. There was no rationing even till a much later period. The horse races in Calcutta continued and attracted their usual fashionable throngs. Transport was lacking for food, but racehorses came in special boxes by rail from other parts of the country. In this gay life both Englishmen and Indians took part, for both had prospered in the business of war and money was plentiful. Sometimes that money had been gained by profiteering in the very foodstuffs, the lack of which was killing tens of thousands daily.

India, it is often said, is a land of contrasts, of some very rich and many very poor, of modernism and medievalism, of rulers and ruled, of the British and Indians. Never before had these contrasts been so much in evidence as in the city of Calcutta during those terrible months of famine in the latter half of 1943. The two worlds, normally living apart, almost ignorant of each other, were suddenly brought physically together and existed side by side. The contrast was startling, but even more startling was the fact that many people did not realize the horror and astonishing incongruity of it and continued to function in their old grooves. What they felt one cannot say; one can only judge them by their actions. For most Englishmen this was perhaps easier for they had lived their life apart and, caste-bound as they were, they could not vary their old routine, even if some individuals felt the urge to do so. But those Indians who functioned in this way showed the wide gulf that separated them from their own people, which no considerations even of decency and humanity could bridge. . . .

The stream of life goes on in spite of famine and war, full of its inherent contradictions and finding sustenance even in those contradictions and the disasters that follow in their train. Nature renews itself and covers yesterday's battlefield with flowers and green grass, and the blood that was shed feeds the soil and gives strength and colour to new life. Human beings with their unique quality of possessing memory live in their storied and remembered pasts and seldom catch up to the present in 'The worlde that neweth every daie.' And that present slips into the past before we are hardly aware of it; today, child of yesterday, yields place to its own offspring, tomorrow. Winged victory ends in a welter of blood and mud; and out of the heavy trials of seeming defeat the spirit emerges with new strength and wider vision. The weak in spirit yield and are eliminated, but others carry the torch forward and hand it to the standard-bearers of tomorrow.

6

The Division of India[1]

India is not a poor country. She is abundantly supplied with everything that makes a country rich, and yet her people are very poor. She has a noble heritage of culture-forms and her culture-potential is very great; but many new developments and the accessories of culture are lacking. This lack is due to many causes and largely to deliberate deprivation. When this is so, the vital energy of the people must overcome the obstacles in the way and fill the lack. That is happening in India today. Nothing can be clearer than the fact that India has the resources as well as the intelligence, skill, and capacity to advance rapidly. She has the accumulated cultural and spiritual experience of ages behind her. She can progress both in scientific theory and the applications of science and become a great industrial nation. Her scientific record is already noteworthy, in spite of many limitations she suffers from and the lack of opportunity for her young men and women to do scientific work. That record is not great considering the size and possibilities of the country, but it is significant of what will happen when the energies of the nation are released and opportunities are provided.

Only two factors may come in the way: international developments and external pressure on India, and lack of a common objective within the country. Ultimately it is the latter alone that will count. If India is split up into two or more parts and can no longer function as a political and economic unit, her progress will be seriously affected. There will be the direct weakening effect, but much worse will be the inner psychological conflict between those who wish to reunite her and those who oppose this. New vested interests will be created which will resist change and progress, a new evil karma will pursue us in the future. One wrong step leads to another; so it has been in the past and so it may be in the future. And yet wrong steps have to be taken sometimes lest some worse peril befall us; that is the great paradox of politics, and no man can say with surety whether present wrong-doing is better and safer in the end than the possibility of that imagined peril. Unity is always better than disunity, but an enforced unity is a sham and dangerous affair, full of explosive possibilities.

[1] From *The Discovery of India*, pp. 526–9.

Unity must be of the mind and heart, a sense of belonging together and of facing together those who attack it. I am convinced that there is that basic unity in India, but it has been overlaid and hidden to some extent by other forces. These latter may be temporary and artificial and may pass off, but they count today and no man can ignore them.

It is our fault, of course, and we must suffer for our failings. But I cannot excuse or forgive the British authorities for the deliberate part they have played in creating disruption in India. All other injuries will pass, but this will continue to plague us for a much longer period. Often I am reminded of Ireland and China when I think of India. Both differ from India and from each other in their past and present problems, and yet there are many similarities. Shall we have to tread that same path in the future?

Jim Phelan in his 'Jail Journey' tells us of the effect of jail on human character, and everyone who has spent a long time in prison knows how true his statement is: 'The jail . . . acts as a magnifying glass on human character. Every tiny weakness is brought out, emphasized, wakened, until presently there is no more of the convict with the weakness but only a weakness wearing convict clothes.' Some such effect is produced on national character by foreign rule. That is not the only effect, for noble qualities also develop and strength is gradually built up through resistance. But foreign authority encourages the former and tries to suppress the latter. Just as we have convict warders in prison whose chief qualification is to spy on their fellow-convicts, so in a subject country there is no lack of puppets and sycophants who put on the livery of authority and act on its behalf. There are others also who do not consciously line up in this way but who are nevertheless influenced by the policies and intrigues of the dominant power.

To accept the principle of a division of India, or rather the principle that there should be no enforced unity, may lead to a calm and dispassionate consideration of its consequences and thus to a realization that unity is in the interest of all. Yet obviously there is the danger that once this wrong step is taken, other like ones may follow in its train. The attempt to solve one problem in the wrong way may well create new problems. If India is to be divided into two or more parts, then the amalgamation of the major Indian states into India becomes more difficult, for those states will find an additional reason, which they might not otherwise have, for keeping aloof and holding on to their authoritarian regimes.*

* It may be said that the Indian States as a whole, while anxious to maintain their internal autonomy, are equally desirous of having a strong federal India of which they are members with equal rights. The proposal to divide India has been vigorously opposed by some of the leading ministers and statesmen of the states, and they have made it clear that, if such a division takes place, the states might well prefer to keep to themselves and not tie up with either part of divided India. Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, the Dewan of Travancore and one

Any division of India on a religious basis as between Hindus and Moslems, as envisaged by the Moslem League today, cannot separate the followers of these two principal religions of India, for they are spread out all over the country. Even if the areas in which each group is in a majority are separated, huge minorities belonging to the other group remain in each area. Thus instead of solving the minority problem, we create several in place of one. Other religious groups, like the Sikhs, are split up unfairly against their will and placed in two different states. In giving freedom to separate to one group, other groups, though in a minority, are denied that freedom and compelled to isolate themselves from the rest of India against their emphatic and deeply felt wishes. If it is said that the majority (religious) must prevail in each area, so far as the question of separation is concerned, there is no particular reason why the majority view should not decide the question for the whole of India. Or that each tiny area should not decide its independent status for itself and thus create a vast number of small

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of the ablest and most experienced of states' ministers (though with a reputation for autocratic methods and a suppression of those of whom he does not approve) is a strong advocate of the internal automomy of the States. He is at the same time an aggressive and persistent opponent of 'Pakistan', or any other suggested division. In an address delivered on October 6th, 1944, before the Bombay branch of the Indian Council of World Affairs, he said: 'The states, in other words, should, and in my view would, come into a scheme whereby the various political and administrative units in India, while exercising a full measure of autonomy in local matters, would cooperate with other units in the composition and working of the central legislative and executive organizations. Such organizations will function effectively within and without the limits of India as national and co-ordinating as well as representative bodies. Within the limits of India the relationship between the units will be one of equality and there will be no question of paramountcy as such inter se, though the rights residual and otherwise of the centre will have to be firmly established and implemented.' He further says: 'My point is this, namely, that treaty rights or no treaty rights, no Indian state has a right to exist which does not come into any scheme by which there is created a central direction of central control of matters that appertain to the Indian states and British India alike, or which does not loyally conform to all political arrangements that may be arrived at for the governess of India and all ideologies that may be evolved as the result of free and equal discussion and resultant compromises.' 'I wish to emphasize strongly, though I know I shall evoke a certain amount of controversy, that no Indian state has the right to exist unless it is abreast of if not ahead of, British India in the things that matter in relation to the well-being of the people'.

Another fact that Ramaswami Aiyar emphasizes is that there is no getting away from the fact that it is impossible to deal with 601 states on an equal footing. He thinks that in a new constitution for India these 601 states will have to be reduced to something like fifteen or twenty, the others being absorbed into the larger units, province or state.

Ramaswami Aiyar apparently does not attach very much importance to this internal political progress of the states, or at any rate considers this a secondary matter. Yet the lack of this, especially in the states otherwise advanced, inevitably leads to ceaseless conflict between the people and the state authorities.

states—an incredible and fantastic development. Even so it cannot be done with any logic, for religious groups are intermingled and overlap in the population all over the country.

It is difficult enough to solve such problems by separation where nationalities are concerned. But where the test becomes a religious one it becomes impossible of solution on any logical basis. It is a reversion to some medieval conception which cannot be fitted into the modern world.

If the economic aspects of separation are considered it is clear that India as a whole is a strong and more-or-less self-sufficient economic unit. Any division will naturally weaken her and one part will have to depend on the other. If the division is made so as to separate the predominantly Hindu and Moslem areas, the former will comprise far the greater part of the mineral resources and industrial areas. The Hindu areas will not be so hard hit from this point of view. The Muslim areas, on the other hand, will be the economically backward, and often deficit, areas which cannot exist without a great deal of outside assistance. Thus the old fact emerges that those who today demand separation will be the greatest sufferers from it. Because of a partial realization of this fact, it is now stated on their behalf that separation should take place in such a way as to give them an economically balanced region. Whether this is possible under any circumstances I do not know, but I rather doubt it. In any event any such attempt means forcibly attaching other large areas with a predominantly Hindu and Sikh population to the separated area. That would be a curious way of giving effect to the principle of self-determination. I am reminded of the story of the man who killed his father and mother and then threw himself on the court as an orphan.

7

A Myth and An Idea, A Dream and A Vision[1]

The discovery of India—what have I discovered? It was presumptuous of me to imagine that I could unveil her and find out what she is today and what she was in the long past. Today she is four hundred million separate individual men and women, each differing from the other, each living in a private universe of thought and feeling. If this is so in the present, how much more difficult is it to grasp that multitudinous past of innumerable successions of human beings. Yet something has bound them together and binds them still. India is a geographical and economic entity, a cultural unity amidst diversity, a bundle of contradictions held together by strong but invisible threads.

Overwhelmed again and again, her spirit was never conquered, and today when she appears to be the plaything of a proud conqueror, she remains unsubdued and unconquered. About her there is the elusive quality of a legend of long ago; some enchantment seems to have held her mind. She is a myth and an idea, a dream and a vision, and yet very real and present and pervasive. There are terrifying glimpses of dark corridors which seem to lead back to primeval night, but also there is the fullness and warmth of the day about her. Shameful and repellent she is occasionally, perverse and obstinate, sometimes even a little hysteric, this lady with a past. But she is very lovable, and none of her children can forget her wherever they go or whatever strange fate befalls them. For she is part of them in her greatness as well as her failings, and they are mirrored in those deep eyes of hers that have seen so much of life's passion and joy and folly, and looked down into wisdom's well. Each one of them is drawn to her, though perhaps each has a different reason for that attraction or can point to no reason at all, and each sees some different aspect of her many-sided personality. From age to age she has produced great men and women, carrying on the old tradition and yet ever adapting it to changing times. Rabindranath Tagore, in line with that great succession, was full of the temper and urges of the modern age and yet was rooted in India's past, and in his own self built up a synthesis of the old and the new. 'I love India,' he said, 'not because I cultivate the idolatry of geography, not because I have had the chance to be born in her soil but because she

[1] From *The Discovery of India*, pp. 562–3.

has saved through tumultuous ages the living words that have issued from the illuminated consciousness of her great ones.' So many will say, while others will explain their love for her in some different way.

The old enchantment seems to be breaking today and she is looking around and waking up to the present. But however she changes, as change she must, that old witchery will continue and hold the hearts of her people. Though her attire may change, she will continue as of old, and her store of wisdom will help her to hold on to what is true and beautiful and good in this harsh, vindictive, and grasping world.

8

Before India is Reborn[1]

It is quite extraordinary how ignorant English people, outside some experts and others, are about India. If facts elude them, how much more is the spirit of India beyond their reach? They seized her body and possessed her, but it was the possession of violence. They did not know her or try to know her. They never looked into her eyes; for theirs were averted and hers downcast through shame and humiliation. After centuries of contact they face each other, strangers still, full of dislike for each other.

And yet India with all her poverty and degradation had enough of nobility and greatness about her, and though she was overburdened with ancient tradition and present misery, and her eyelids were a little weary, she had 'a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions'. Behind and within her battered body one could still glimpse a majesty of soul. Through long ages she had travelled and gathered much wisdom on the way, and trafficked with strangers and added them to her own big family, and witnessed days of glory and of decay, and suffered humiliation and terrible sorrow, and seen many a strange sight; but throughout her long journey she had clung to her immemorial culture, drawn strength and vitality from it, and shared it with other lands. Like a pendulum she had swung up and down; she had ventured with the daring of her thought to reach up to the heavens and unravel their mystery, and she had also had bitter experience of the pit of hell. Despite the woeful accumulations of superstition and degrading custom that had clung to her and borne her down, she had never wholly forgotten the inspiration that some of the wisest of her children, at the dawn of history, had given her in the *Upanishads*. The keen minds, ever restless and ever striving and exploring, had not sought refuge in blind dogma or grown complacent in the routine observance of dead forms or ritual and creed. They had demanded not a personal relief from suffering in the present or a place in a paradise to come, but light and understanding: 'Lead me from the unreal to the real, lead me from darkness to light, lead me from

[1] Article published in *Asia* (New York), June 1936. SWJN, Vol. 3, pp. 631–44. Excerpts.

death to immortality,' as the *Brihadaranyak Upanishad*[2] expresses it. In the most famous of the prayers recited daily even today by millions, the *Gayatri mantra*,[3] the call is for knowledge, for enlightenment.

Though often up politically, India's spirit always guarded a common heritage, and in her diversity there was ever an amazing unity. Like all ancient lands she was a curious mixture of the good and bad, but the good was hidden and had to be sought after, while the odour of decay was evident and her hot, pitiless sun gave full publicity to the bad. . . .

It is curious how one cannot resist the tendency to give an anthropomorphic form to a country. Such is the force of habit and early associations. India becomes Bharat Mata, Mother India, a beautiful lady, very old but ever youthful in appearance, sad-eyed and forlorn, cruelly treated by aliens and outsiders, and calling upon her children to protect her. Some such picture rouses the emotions of hundreds of thousands and drives them to action and sacrifice. And yet India is in the main the peasant and the worker, not beautiful to look at, for poverty is not beautiful. Does the beautiful lady of our imaginations represent the bare-bodied and bent workers in the fields and factories? Or the small group of those who have from ages past crushed the masses and exploited them, imposed cruel customs on them and made many of them even untouchable? We seek to cover truth by the creatures of our imaginations and endeavour to escape from reality to a world of dreams.

And yet despite these different classes and their mutual conflicts there was a common bond which united them in India, and one is amazed at its persistence and tenacity and enduring vitality. What was this strength due to? Not merely the passive strength and weight of inertia and tradition, great as these always are. There was an active sustaining principle; for it resisted successfully powerful outside influences and absorbed internal forces that rose to combat it. And yet with all its strength it could not preserve political freedom or endeavour to bring about political unity. It did not seem to think them worth taking much trouble about. Very foolishly it ignored their importance and suffered for this neglect. Right through history the old Indian ideal did not glorify political and military triumph, and it looked down upon money and the class that made money-making its profession. Honour and wealth did not go together, and honour was meant to go, at least in theory to the men who served the community with little in the shape of financial reward.

The old culture managed to live through many a fierce storm and tempest, but, though it kept its outer form, it lost its real content. Today it is fighting silently and desperately against a new and all-powerful opponent—the *bania*

[2] One of the 18 prominent *Upanishads*.

[3] An English rendering of this Vedic hymn transcribed by Jawaharlal in his notebook, is: '*Om*! Hail to the regions of the earth, air, and the heavens! We meditate on the glorious effulgence of the divine sun. May he stimulate and direct our intelligence!'

or money-lender civilization of the capitalist West. It will succumb to this newcomer; for the West brings science, and science brings food for the hungry millions. But the West also brings an antidote to the evils of this cut-throat civilization—the principles of socialism, of cooperation, and service to the community for the common good. This is not so unlike the old brahmin ideal of service, but it means the brahminization (not in the religious sense of course) of all classes and groups and the abolition of class distinctions. It may be that when India puts on her new garment—as she must, for the old is torn and tattered—she will have it cut in this fashion, so as to make it conform both to present conditions and to her old thought. The ideas she adopts must become racy to her soil.

What has been the record of British rule in India? I doubt if it is possible for any Indian or Englishman to take an objective and dispassionate view of this long record. And, even if this were possible, it would be still more difficult to weigh and measure the psychological and other immaterial factors. We are told that British rule 'has given to India that which throughout the centuries she never possessed, a government whose authority is unquestioned in any part of the subcontinent'; it has established the rule of law and a just and efficient administration; it has brought to India western conceptions of parliamentary government and personal liberties; and 'by transforming British India into a single unitary state it has engendered amongst Indians a sense of political unity' and thus fostered the first beginning of nationalism. That is the British case, and there is much truth in it, though the rule of law and personal liberties have not been evident for many years.

The Indian survey of this period lays stress on many other factors, and points out the injury, material and spiritual, that foreign rule has brought us. The point of view is so different that sometimes the very thing that is commended by the British is condemned by Indians. . . .

The British conception of ruling India was the police conception of the state. Government's job was to protect the state and leave the rest to others. Public finance dealt with military expenditure, police, civil administration, interest on debt. The economic needs of the citizens were not looked after, and were sacrificed to British interests. The cultural and other needs of the people, except for a tiny handful, were entirely neglected. The changing conceptions of public finance which brought free and universal education, improvement of public health, care of the poor and feeble-minded, insurance of workers against illness, old age and unemployment and the like in other countries, were almost entirely beyond the ken of the government. It could not indulge in these spending activities; for its tax system was most regressive, taking a much larger proportion of small incomes than of the larger ones, and its expenditure on its protective and administrative functions was terribly heavy and swallowed up most of the revenue.

The outstanding feature of rule by the British was their concentration on everything that went to strengthen their political and economic hold on the country. Everything else was incidental. If they built up a powerful central government and an efficient police force, that was an achievement for which they can take credit, but the Indian people can hardly congratulate themselves on it. Unity is a good thing, but unity in subjection is hardly a thing to be proud of. The very strength of a despotic government may become a greater burden for a people; and a police force, no doubt useful in many ways, can be, and has been often enough, turned against the very people it is supposed to protect. Bertrand Russell, comparing modern civilization with the old Greek, has recently written: 'The only serious superiority of Greek civilization as compared to ours was the inefficiency of the police, which enabled a larger proportion of decent people to escape.'

Britian's supremacy in India brought us peace, and India was certainly in need of peace after the troubles and misfortunes that followed the break-up of the Moghul Empire. Peace is a precious commodity, necessary for any progress, and it was welcome to us when it came. But even peace can be purchased at too great a price, and we can have the perfect peace of the grave, and the absolute safety of a cage or of prison. Or peace may be the sodden despair of men unable to better themselves. The peace which is imposed by an alien conqueror has hardly the restful and soothing qualities of the real article. War is a terrible thing and to be avoided, but it does encourage some virtues, which, according to William James,[4] the psychologist, are: fidelity, cohesiveness, tenacity, heroism, conscience, education, inventiveness, economy and physical health and vigour. Because of this James sought for a moral equivalent of war which, without the horrors of war, would encourage these virtues in a community. Perhaps if he had learned of noncooperation and civil disobedience he would have found something after his own heart, a moral and peaceful equivalent of war.

It is a futile task to consider the 'ifs' and possibilities of history. I feel sure that it was a good thing for India to come in contact with the scientific and industrial West. Science was the great gift of the West, and India lacked this, and without it she was doomed to decay. The manner of our contacts was unfortunate and yet, perhaps, only a succession of violent shocks could shake us out of our torpor. From this point of view the Protestant, individualistic, Anglo-Saxon English were suitable; for they were more different from us than most other westerners and could give us greater shocks.

They gave us political unity and that was a desirable thing, but, whether we had it or not, Indian nationalism would have grown and demanded that unity. The Arab world is today split up into a large number of separate states—

[4] (1842–1910); an American psychologist and philosopher; founder of the pragmatist movement; his works include *The Will to Believe, Principles of Psychology,* and *The Varieties of Religious Experience.*

independent, protected, mandatory and the like—but throughout all of them runs the desire for Arab unity. There can be no doubt that Arab nationalism would largely achieve this unity if western imperialist powers did not stand in the way. But, as in India, it is the purpose of these powers to encourage disruptive tendencies and create minority problems which weaken and partly counteract the nationalist urge and give an excuse to the imperialist power to stay on and pose as the impartial arbitrator. The political unity of India was achieved incidentally as a side-product of the empire's advance. In later years, when that unity allied itself to nationalism and challenged alien rule, we witnessed the deliberate promotion of disunity and sectarianism, formidable obstacles to progress.

What a long time it is since the British came here, a century and three quarters since they became dominant! They had a free hand, as despotic governments have, and a magnificent opportunity to mould India according to their desire. During these years the world has changed out of all recognition—England, Europe, America, Japan. The insignificant American colonies bordering the Atlantic in the eighteenth century constitute today the wealthiest, the most powerful and technically the most advanced nation; Japan, within a brief span, has undergone amazing changes; the vast territories of the USSR, where till only yesterday the dead hand of the Czar's government suppressed and stifled all growth, now pulsate with a new life and build a new world before our eyes. There have been big changes in India also, and the country is very different from what it was in the eighteenth century—railways, irrigation works, factories, schools and colleges, huge government offices and so forth.

And yet, in spite of these changes, what is India like today? A servile state, with its splendid strength caged up, hardly daring to breathe freely, governed by strangers from afar; her people poor beyond compare, short-lived and incapable of resisting disease and epidemic; illiteracy rampant, vast areas devoid of all sanitary or medical provision; unemployment on a prodigious scale both among the middle classes and the masses. Freedom, democracy, socialism, communism are, we are told, the slogans of unpractical idealists, doctrinaires or knaves; the test must be one of the well-being of the people as a whole. That is indeed a vital test, and by that test India makes a terribly poor showing today. We read of great schemes of unemployment relief and the alleviation of distress in other countries; what of our scores of millions of unemployed and the distress that is widespread and permanent? We read also of housing schemes elsewhere; where are the houses of hundreds of millions of our people, who live in mud huts or have no shelter at all? May we not envy the lot of other countries where education, sanitation, medical relief, cultural facilities and production proceed rapidly ahead, while we remain where we were or plod wearily along at the pace of a snail? Russia in a brief dozen years of wonderful effort has almost ended illiteracy in her vast territories, and has evolved a fine

and up-to-date system of education, in touch with the life of the masses. Backward Turkey, under the Ataturk Mustapha Kemal's leadership, has also made giant strides toward widespread literacy. Fascist Italy, on the very threshold of its career, attacked illiteracy with vigour. Gentile,[5] the Education Minister, called for 'a frontal attack on illiteracy. That gangrenous plague, which is rotting our body politic, must be extirpated with a hot iron.' Hard words, unseemly for a drawing-room, but they show the conviction and energy behind the thought. We are politer here and use more rounded phrases. We move warily and exhaust our energies in commissions and committees: Indians have been accused of talking too much and doing little. It is a just charge. But may we not express our wonder at the inexhaustible capacity of the British for committees and commissions, each of which, after long labour, produces a learned report—'a great state document'—which is duly praised and pigeonholed? And so we get the sensation of moving ahead, of progress, and yet have the advantage of remaining where we were. Honour is satisfied, and vested interests remain untouched and secure. Other countries discuss how to get on; we discuss checks and brakes and safeguards lest we go too fast.

'The imperial splendour became the measure of the people's poverty', so we are told by the Joint Parliamentary Committee, 1934, with reference to the Moghul times. It is a just observation, but may we not apply the same measure today? What of New Delhi today with its Viceregal pomp and pageantry, and the provincial Governors with all their ostentation? And all this with a background of abject and astonishing poverty. The contrast hurts, and it is a little difficult to imagine how sensitive men can put up with it. India today is a poor and dismal sight behind all the splendours of the imperial frontage. There is a great deal of patchwork and superficiality, and behind it the unhappy petty bourgeoisie, crushed more and more by modern conditions. Further back come the workers, living miserably in grinding poverty, and then the peasant, that symbol of India, whose lot is like that of Edwin Markham's[6] *Man with the Hoe*, to be 'born to Endless Night'.

It would be absurd to cast the blame for all India's ills on the British. That responsibility must be shouldered by us, and we may not shirk it; it is unseemly to blame others for the inevitable consequences of our own weaknesses. An authoritarian system of government, and especially one that is foreign, must encourage a psychology of subservience and try to limit the mental outlook and horizon of the people. It must crush much that is finest in youth—enterprise, spirit of adventure, originality, 'pep'—and encourage sneakishness, rigid conformity and a desire to cringe and please the bosses. Such a system does not bring out the mentality of real service, the devotion to public service or to ideals;

[5] Giovanni Gentile (1875–1944); Italian philosopher and theorist of fascism.

[6] (1852–1940); American poet, whose poem *The Man with the Hoe*, written in 1898, was a protest against the debasing drudgery and exploitation of labour.

it picks out the least public-spirited persons whose sole objective is to get on in life. We see what a class the British attract to themselves in India! Some of them are intellectually keen and capable of good work. They drift to government service or semi-government service because of lack of opportunity elsewhere, and gradually they tone down and become just parts of the big machine, their minds imprisoned by the dull routine of work. They develop the qualities of a bureaucracy—'a competent knowledge of clerkship and the diplomatic art of keeping office'. At the highest they have a passive devotion to the public service. There is, or can be, no flaming enthusiasm. That is not possible under a foreign government.

But, apart from these, the majority of petty officials are not an admirable lot; for they have only learned to cringe to their superiors and bully their inferiors. The fault is not theirs. That is the training the system gives them. And if sycophancy and nepotism flourish, as they often do, is to be wondered at? They have no ideals in service; the haunting fear of unemployment and consequent starvation pursues them, and their chief concern is to hold on to their jobs and get other jobs for their relatives and friends. Where the spy and that most odious of creatures, the informer, always hover in the background, it is not easy to develop the more desirable virtues in a people.

Recent developments have made it even more difficult for sensitive, public-spirited men to join government service. The government does not want them, and they do not wish to associate with it too closely, unless compelled by economic circumstance.

But, as all the world knows, it is the White Man who bears the burden of empire, not the Brown. We have various imperial services to carry on the imperial tradition, and a sufficiency of safeguards to protect their special privileges, all, we are told, in the interests of India. It is remarkable how the good of India seems to be tied up with the personal interests and advancement of these services. If any privilege or prize post of the Indian Civil Service is taken away, we are told that inefficiency and corruption will result. If the reserved jobs for the Indian Medical Service are reduced, this becomes a 'menace to India's health'. And, of course, if the British element in the army is touched, all manner of terrible perils confront us.

I think there is some truth in this: that if the superior officials suddenly went away and left their departments in charge of their subordinates there would be a fall in efficiency. But that is because the whole system has been built this way, and the subordinates are not by any means the best men, nor have they ever been made to shoulder responsibility. I feel convinced that there is abundant good material in India, and it could be available within a fairly short period if proper steps were taken. But that means a complete change in our governmental and social outlook. It means a new state.

But of one thing I am quite sure, that no new order can be built up in India

so long as the spirit of the Indian Civil Services pervades our administration and our public service. That spirit of authoritarianism is the ally of imperialism, and it cannot coexist with freedom. It will either succeed in crushing freedom or will be swept away itself. Only with one type of state is it likely to fit in, and that is the fascist type. Therefore it seems to me quite essential that the Indian Civil Services and similar services must disappear completely, as such, before we can start real work on a new order. Individual members of these services, if they are willing and competent for the new job, will be welcome, but only on new conditions. It is quite inconceivable that they will get the absurdly high salaries and allowances that are paid to them today. The new India must be served by earnest, efficient workers who have an ardent faith in the cause they serve and are bent on achievement, and who work for the joy and glory of it, and not for the attraction of high salaries. The money motive must be reduced to a minimum. This is a vital matter on which it is impossible to give in; for Indian freedom is bound up not only with the withdrawal of British forces and services, but also with the elimination of the authoritarian spirit that inspired them, and a levelling down of their salaries and privileges. The need for foreign helpers will be considerable, but I imagine that the least wanted will be civil administrators who have no technical knowledge. There will be no lack of such people in India.

What has been the record of British rule in India? Who are we to complain of its deficiencies when they were but the consequences of our own failings? If we lose touch with the river of change and enter a backwater, become self-centered and self-satisfied and, ostrich-like, ignore what happens elsewhere, we do so at our peril. The British came to us on the crest of a wave of new impulse in the world, and represented mighty historic forces which they themselves hardly realized. Are we to complain of the cyclone that uproots us and hurls us about, or the cold wind that makes us shiver? Let us have done with the past and its bickering, and face the future. To the British we must be grateful for one splendid gift of which they were the bearers, the gift of science and its rich offspring. It is difficult, however, to forget or view with equanimity the efforts of the British Government to encourage the disruptive, obscurantist, reactionary, sectarian and opportunist elements in India. Perhaps that too is a needed test and challenge for us, and before India is reborn it will have to go through again and again the fire that cleanses and tempers and burns up the weak, the impure and corrupt.

9

The Unity of India[1]

Most Americans, bred up in the democratic tradition, sympathize with the struggle for freedom in India. They dislike empire and imperialism and domination and exploitation of one nation by another. And yet they wonder if it is possible to build up a united and progressive nation out of the seemingly infinite diversity that makes up the fabric of Indian life. They have heard so much of the separatist elements, of the conflicts of religion and culture, of the variety of languages, of the medieval conditions in the semi-feudal regions of the Indian States, of social cleavages, of the general backwardness of Indian life, that doubts assail them whether it is possible to harmonize all these in a free and independent India. Can democracy be built up on these insecure foundations? Can India stand together and free if British rule was withdrawn?

These hesitations and perplexities are natural and the doubts and questions that give rise to them must be considered by us dispassionately and an attempt made to find answers. Freedom for a nation and a people may be, and is, I believe, always good in the long run; but in the final analysis, freedom itself is a means to an end, that end being the raising of those people to higher levels and the general advancement of humanity. In India the vital and most important problem that faces us is the appalling poverty of the people. Will political independence help us to get rid of this as well as of the numerous ills that flow from it?

It is well to remember that the British have been in effective control of India for more than a hundred and fifty years and during this period they have had almost complete freedom to act in any manner they chose. There was no democratic or any other kind of control, the British Parliament being too far away and too ignorant to intervene. India was, and is, a rich country, rich in her agricultural resources, her mineral wealth, her human material; only her people are poor. It was indeed the wealth of India that attracted hordes of foreign adventurers to her shores. With these resources and material and a century and a half of unchecked despotism, one is entitled to ask for substantial

[1] Allahabad, 8 October 1937. Jawaharlal Nehru Papers, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (henceforth JN Papers, NMML). First printed in *Foreign Affairs*, January 1938, and reprinted with a few changes in *The Unity of India* (London, 1941), pp. 11–26.

results. During this period Europe has changed out of recognition, Japan has transformed herself up with an amazing speed, America has become the most advanced and the wealthiest country in the world. But in India we have this grinding poverty, and widespread illiteracy, and general absence of sanitation and medical relief, and a lack of all the good things of life. There are undoubtedly some good works which have followed British rule, notably in irrigation, but how little they are compared to what might have been! It is idle to blame the people for this when those people were allowed no say in the matter. The very backwardness of a people is a condemnation of the government. With this patent result of British rule in India, little argument is needed to demonstrate its failure. But even admitting its failure, it is true that our present problems are no nearer solution. Yet it is well to bear this in mind, for the very structure of British imperialist rule has been, and is, such as to aggravate all our problems and not to solve any of them. And because these problems insistently demand solution, we have to look for it outside the orbit of the British Empire.

India is smaller than the United States of America, yet it is a vast country in size, and in population it is far larger than the USA. Our problems therefore are continental, unlike those of the small countries of Europe. Till the advent of modern communications and modern methods of transport, it was very difficult for such a vast area to hold together politically for long. The USA have grown and developed into a powerful unit, despite their vast area, because of this development in transport and communication. If the USA had a past history, going back hundreds and thousands of years before modern science and industry revolutionized life, it is exceedingly probable that they would have been split up into many small national units, as in Europe. If India has been split up politically in the course of her long history, it was inevitable under the then existing conditions. Yet always the idea of the political unity of India persisted and kings and emperors sought to realize it. Asoka indeed achieved it two thousand years ago and built up an empire far greater than that of Britain in India today. This empire stretched right into Central Asia and included Afghanistan. Only a tiny tip in south India remained outside it, and this because of the horror of war and bloodshed that came over Asoka in the full flood of victory and conquest. Many another ruler in the past tried to achieve the political unification of India and succeeded in some measure. But this desire for a unified political control of the whole country could not be realized as the means and machinery were lacking. The coming of the British to India synchronized with the development in transport, communication and modern industry, and so the British rule succeeded at last in establishing the political unity of India.

This desire for political unity, in India as in other countries before the advent of nationalism, was usually the desire of the ruler or the conqueror, and not of the people as a whole. In India, where for long ages there was a large measure of local self-government, the people were far more interested in their local

freedom and rights than in the machine of government at the top. Kings changed at the top but the newcomer respected these local rights and did not interfere with them. Because of this, conflicts between kings and people did not take place as in Europe, and later under cover of this kings gradually built up their autocratic power.

An all-India political unity was thus not possible in the past, but what is far more important for us is to see what other more basic unifying or separatist features there were in Indian life. This will help us to understand the present and shape the future. Superficial observers of India, accustomed to the standardization which modern industry has brought about in the West, are apt to be impressed too much by the variety and diversity of India. They miss the unity of India, and yet the tremendous and fundamental fact of India is her essential unity throughout the ages. Indian history runs into thousands of years, and, of all modern nations, only China has this continuous and ancient background of culture. Five to six thousand years ago the Indus Valley civilization flourished all over northern India and probably extended to the south also, and even then it was highly developed with millennia of growth behind it. From that early dawn of history innumerable people, conquerors and settlers, pilgrims and students, have trekked into the Indian plains from the highlands of Asia, and they have influenced Indian life and culture and art, but always they have been absorbed and assimilated by India. India changed by these contacts and yet she remained essentially her own old self; like the ocean she received the tribute of a thousand rivers, and though she was disturbed often enough and storms raged over the surface of her waters, the sea continued to be the sea. It is astonishing to note how India continued successfully this process of assimilation and adaptation. It could only do so if the idea of a fundamental unity was so deep rooted as to be accepted even by the newcomer, and if this culture was flexible and adaptable to changing conditions.

Vincent Smith[2] in his *Oxford History of India* refers to this: 'India, beyond all doubt, possesses a deep underlying unity, far more profound than that produced either by geographical isolation or by political suzerainty. That unity transcends the innumerable diversities of blood, colour, language, dress, manners, and sect.'

Sir Frederick Whyte[3] in *The Future of East and West* also stresses this unity. He refers to the tremendous diversity of India and yet 'the greatest of all the contradictions in India is that over this diversity is spread a greater unity, which is not immediately evident because it failed historically to find expression in any

[2] (1848–1920); British civil servant and historian; author of several books on Indian history, numismatics, art and archaeology.

[3] (1883–1970); president, Indian Legislative Assembly, 1920–5; political adviser to the national government of China. 1929–32; author of *Asia in the Twentieth Century, China and Foreign Powers*, and *The Future of East and West*.

political cohesion to make the country one, but which is so great a reality, and so powerful, that even the Mussulman world of India has to confess that it has been deeply affected by coming within its influence.'

This background and unity were essentially cultural; they were not religious in the narrow sense of the word. That culture was not exclusive or intolerant to begin with; it was receptive and adaptable, and long ages of pre-eminence gave it deep roots and a solidity which storms could not shake. It developed an aristocratic attitude which, secure in its own strength, could afford to be tolerant and broad-minded. And this very toleration gave it greater strength and adaptability. There was in it, till almost the beginning of the Christian era, a certain rationalism, something approaching a scientific outlook, which refused to tie itself down to dogmas. True, this culture and rationalism were largely confined to the upper classes, but they percolated down to the masses to some extent. Superstitions and dogmas and many an evil practice gradually crept in. Buddhism was a revolt against these. But the old way of life was still powerful, and it is one of the wonders of history how India succeeded in absorbing Buddhism without any physical conflict. Buddhism, which had spread throughout India, and had made progress from Western Asia right across Central Asia to the Far East, gradually faded out of the land of its birth. The man who is supposed to be largely responsible for this was Shankaracharya, who lived in the eighth century after Christ. This amazingly brilliant young man travelled all over India, arguing, debating, convincing large audiences, and in a few years (he died at the age of 32) changed the mental atmosphere of the country. The appeal was to reason and logic, not to force.

This practice of debate and conference over religious and other matters was common all over India and there are records of many great gatherings from Kashmir in the north to the far south. Whatever the political divisions of the country, ideas spread rapidly all over the land and were hotly debated. India hung together culturally and the mental background of the people everywhere was much the same. Even the masses in different parts of the country were not dissimilar in thought and outlook. The chief places of pilgrimage fixed by Shankaracharya were situated at the four corners of India: Badrinath in the Himalayas in the north, Rameswaram near Cape Comorin in the south, Dwarka in the west overlooking the Arabian Sea, and Puri in the east, washed by the waters of the Bay of Bengal. Thus there was continuous intercourse between the peoples of the different parts of India. India as a whole was their holy land.

It is interesting to compare the intolerance of Europe in matters religious to the wide tolerance prevailing almost throughout history in India. Christianity came to India in the first century after Christ, long before Europe knew much about it, and found a welcome and a home. There was no opposition whatever. Even now there are many early Christian sects flourishing in India, which were

crushed out of existence in Europe. There are the Nestorians, and various Syrian Christian sects. The Jews came to India also about eighteen hundred years ago or more and were welcomed. They still live their community life and parts of an ancient city where they live are supposed to resemble old Jerusalem. The Zoroastrians also came to India, driven out from Persia, and made their home here, and have flourished ever since. The Muslims came first very soon after the advent of Islam and they found ready admittance and welcome and full opportunities for propagating their faith. For centuries there was no conflict except on the frontiers; it was only when Muslims came as conquerors and raiders that there was conflict.

The coming of Muslim rule shook India. For a while there was a conflict between the old background and the new, but soon the old spirit of India began to assert itself and attempts began to be made to find a synthesis of the old and the new. Even in religion, most difficult subject of all, this attempt was repeatedly made, by Nanak,[4] Kabir,[5] and others. The Muslim rulers generally accepted the background of Indian life and culture, varied by Persian cultural ideas. There was no difficulty whatever in the adaptation of old Indian arts to new ideas. New styles grew up in architecture and painting which were truly a synthesis of the two and yet were essentially Indian. So also in music. Even in dress a certain uniformity crept in, and a common language developed.

Thus the whole history of India for thousands of years past shows her essential unity and the vitality and adaptability of her culture. This vitality took her message in art and thought and religion to the Far East, it took the shape of great colonizing expeditions to Malaysia, to Java and Sumatra and the Philippines and Borneo, and the remains of great monuments there, a thousand years old, bear testimony to it.

Behind this cultural unity, and giving strength to it, was the ceaseless attempt to find a harmony between the inner man and his outer environment. To some extent this was the medieval outlook of the Middle Ages in Europe, and yet it was probably something more. The profit motive was not so obvious and riches were not valued in the same way as elsewhere. Unlike Europe, honour was reserved for the man of intellect and the man who served the state or society, and the great soldier or the rich man took second and third place. Perhaps it was this want of stress on the outer environment that made India politically weak and backward, when external progress was so rapid in the West.

This past record of Indian cultural solidarity does not necessarily help us today, for it is the present conditions that we have to deal with, and memories of what has been may be of little avail. But though that is perfectly true, yet an ancient people have deep roots in the past and we cannot ignore them. Both the

[4] (1460–1504); the first of the Sikh Gurus.

[5] (1440–1518); a Muslim weaver whose songs and teachings emphasized the unity of all religions.

good and the bad that we possess have sprung from those roots; they give us strength and inspiration, they also burden us and tie us down to many a harmful tradition and evil practice. India undoubtedly deteriorated and the vital urge in her began to lessen. Her power to assimilate and absorb became feebler, and the flexibility of her thought and structure gave place to rigidity. What was dynamic became more and more static. The rationalism and the scientific basis of her thought continued for a favoured few, but for others irrationalism and superstition held sway. Caste, which was a division of society by occupation, and which was far from rigid, developed a fearful rigidity and became the citadel of social reaction and the exploitation of the masses. For a long time India vegetated, the strength had gone out of her, and it was inevitable that she should fall an easy prey to the better-equipped and more vital and technically advanced nations of the West.

The immediate result of this was the growth of conservatism, a further shrinking inside her shell in self-defence. British rule helped this process by crystallizing many a changing custom and giving it the force of law. More important in keeping India back was the economic structure which British rule built up. The feudal Indian state system, the gilded maharajas and nawabs, and the big landlords system were essentially British creations in India. We have them, to our misfortune, still with us. But this desire of the British rulers to keep a semi-feudal structure in India could not keep back the impact of new ideas and new conditions.

The British themselves came to the East on the wave of the great impulse which the coming of industrialism gave to the world and India was inevitably affected by this impulse. For their own purposes, and in order to entrench themselves, they built railways and the other accompaniments of a modern administration. They tried hard to stop the industrial growth of India, desiring to keep her as a producer of raw material only and a consumer of British manufactured goods. But the industrial revolution had to spread to India, though it came slowly because of the obstruction on the part of the government.

The British gave political unity to India. This was possible now owing to the development of communications and transport. It was a unity of a common subjection, but it gave rise to the unity of a common nationalism, and the idea of a united and free India gripped the people. It was not a superficial idea imposed from above, but the natural outcome of that fundamental unity which had been the background of Indian life for thousands of years. The difference that had crept in was the new emphasis on the political aspect. To combat this, the British Government tried to lay stress on the religious differences and adopted a policy to encourage them and bring them into conflict with each other. It has had a measure of success, but nationalism, in India as in the other countries of the East, is the dominant urge of the time and must triumph. This nationalism is being tempered today by the economic urge, but this is still

further removed from the medieval outlook which thinks in terms of religious groupings in political affairs.

The growth of the powerful nationalist movement in India, represented by the National Congress, has demonstrated the political unity of India. During the last seventeen years vast upheavals, in the nature of a peaceful rebellion, have taken place throughout the length and breadth of the country, and shaken the foundations of British rule. This voluntary organization, commanding the willing allegiance of millions, has played a great role in fixing the idea of Indian unity in the minds of our masses. The capacity for united action and disciplined sacrifice for a national ideal which our masses have shown has demonstrated not only the probability of Indian unity but its actual existence. In India today no one whatever his political views or religious persuasions might be, thinks in terms other than those of national unity.

There are differences of course and certain separatist tendencies, but even these do not oppose national freedom or unity. They seek to gain a special favour for their group and because of this they hinder sometimes the growth of the nationalist movement. Religious differences affect politics less and less, though still sometimes they distract attention. There is no religious or communal problem in India. What is called the religious or communal problem is really a dispute among upper class people for a division of the spoils of office or of representation in a legislature. This will surely be settled amicably wherever it arises.

Language is supposed to divide up India into innumerable compartments and we are told by the census that there are 222 languages or dialects in India. I suppose the census of the USA mentions a very large number of languages; I think the German census mentions over sixty. But most of those languages are spoken by small groups of people or are dialects. In India owing to absence of mass education dialects have grown. As a matter of fact India is a singularly unified area, so far as languages are concerned. Altogether there are a dozen languages and these are closely allied to each other. They fall into two groups—the Indo-Aryan languages of the north and centre and west, and the Dravidian languages of the south and the east. The Indo-Aryan languages derive from Sanskrit and if one knows one of them, it is easy to learn another. The Dravidian languages are different, but each one of them contains fifty per cent or more words from the Sanskrit. The dominant language in India is Hindustani (Hindi or Urdu) which is already spoken by a huge block of a hundred and twenty million people and is partly understood by scores of millions of others. This language is bound to become the all-India medium of communication, not displacing the great provincial languages, but as a compulsory second language. With mass education on behalf of the state this will not be difficult. Already with talkies and the radio, the range of Hindustani is spreading fast. The writer of this article has had occasion to address great mass audiences all

over India and almost always, except in the south, he has used Hindustani and been understood. Whatever difficult problems India has to solve, and they are many, it is clear that the language problem is not one of them. This is already well on the way to solution.

It will thus be seen that the forces working for Indian unity are formidable and overwhelming and it is difficult to conceive of any separatist tendency which can break up this unity. Some of the major Indian princes might represent such a tendency, but they flourish not from their own inherent strength, but because of the support of the British power. When that support goes, they will have to surrender to the wishes of their own people, among whom the sentiment of national unity is widespread.

This does not mean that our problems are easy of solution. They are very difficult, as every major problem in the world today is difficult, and probably their solution will depend on international as well as on national factors. But the real problems of India, as of the rest of the world, are economic, and they are so interrelated that it is hardly possible to tackle them separately. The land problem is the outstanding question of India and without revolutionary changes in our agriculture and land system it is difficult to see any final solution of it. Feudal relics and the big landlord system are hindrances to development and will have to go. The tiny holdings, averaging a fraction of an acre per person, are uneconomic and wasteful and too small for the application of scientific methods of agriculture. Large-scale state and collective or cooperative farms must be established instead, and this cannot be done so long as the vested interests in land are not removed. Even when this is done the vast urban and rural unemployment will not be reduced. For that, as well as for other obvious reasons, we must push the industrialization of the country. This again requires the development of social services—education, sanitation, etc. And so the problem becomes a vast many-sided one affecting land, industry and all departments of life, and it can only be tackled on a nationally planned basis with no vested interests to obstruct our planning. Therefore, many of us think that a socialist structure is necessary for in no other way can such planning be organized and pushed through.

But then the vested interests come in—there lies the real difficulty and conflict. Far the greatest of these is the City of London, representing British finance and industry, and the Government of India is but a shadow of it when vital interests are concerned. There are the imperial services and Indian vested interests also, the princes and others. The new Constitution in India, though giving a certain leverage in the provinces owing to the extension of the electorate, is essentially designed to protect these special interests and keep British imperialism in India intact. Even in the provinces real power rests with the Governors and the revenues are largely mortgaged to these interests. Such strength as there is behind the provincial governments comes far more from the

organized national movement than from the Constitution Act. Fear of conflict with this movement, resulting possibly in the suspension of the Constitution, prevents too much interference with the provincial governments. But the position is essentially unstable and conflicts are inherent in it. Besides, under the financial provisions and reservations it is not possible to undertake any really big schemes of social reform.

But the proposed federal structure is far the worst part of the Constitution as it gives permanence to the feudal Indian States and, in addition, gives them some power to interfere in the affairs of the rest of India. The whole conception of a union of imperialism, feudalism and democracy is incapable of realization and can only mean the entrenchment of all the reactionary elements in India. It must be remembered that the Indian State system is over a hundred years old and it has continued more or less unchanged during this past century. During this period Europe and the world have changed past recognition and it is a monstrous imposition that we should be permanently saddled with these feudal relics which prevent all growth. Hence the fierce opposition to the federal structure and the Constitution Act as a whole.

The National Congress stands for independence and a democratic state. It has proposed that the Constitution of a free India must be framed, without outside interference, by a constituent assembly elected on an adult franchise. That is the democratic way and there is no other way, short of revolution, which may bring anything in its train. An assembly elected by adult franchise will represent the people as a whole and will be far more interested in the economic and social problems of the masses than in the petty communal issues which affect small groups. Thus it will solve without much difficulty the communal and other like problems. It will not solve so easily the economic problems, but the clash of interests there is similar to that found all over the world. In the worldwide conflict of ideas and politics, India stands for democracy and against fascism and the totalitarian state. She stands for peace and cooperation between nations and ultimately the building up of a world order.

Will an independent India be strong enough to protect herself from outside aggression and invasion? If India is strong enough to gain her freedom from British imperialism, which has so long been entrenched in her soil, it seems to follow that she will also be strong enough to resist fresh aggression. The strength of a nation is a relative affair, depending on a host of internal and external factors. Most independent countries today are not strong enough to stop by themselves the aggression of a great power. Even a great power might succumb to a combination of other powers. Probably the USA is the only country which is so fortunately situated and is so strong in every way as to resist successfully almost any hostile combination. The others depend for their independence partly on their own strength, but more so on a combination of circumstances. It is a precarious position, full of risk and danger, when world war darkens the horizon.

India will of course take all necessary steps to strengthen her defences and she has the industrial and other resources to do so. Her policy will be one of friendship to her neighbours and others and she will avoid conflict. The National Congress has already declared that in the event of Britain being involved in an imperialist war, India will not be a party to it. There is no doubt that India can build up an efficient defence apparatus. Her army today, though lacking in Indian officers, is considered an efficient force.

Who might be the aggressor against India? It is hardly likely that any European nation will embark on this rash adventure, for each country in Europe fears its neighbour. Soviet Russia, for purposes of aggression, is definitely out of the picture; she is wedded to a policy of international peace, and India fulfils no want of hers. Afghanistan and the border tribes are also out of the question. Our policy towards them will be one of close friendship and cooperation, utterly unlike the 'forward policy' of the British which relies on bombing combatants and non-combatants alike. But even if they were hostile and aggressive, they are too backward industrially to meet a modern army outside their own mountains.

Japan is mentioned as a possible aggressor, and it is said that militarists in Japan dream of Asiatic and even world dominion. Perhaps so, but before they can approach India they will have to crush and absorb the whole of China, an undertaking which most people think is utterly beyond their capacity, and one which will involve at some stage conflict with other great powers. How can Japan come to India? Not overland. Deserts and the Himalayas offer an effective barrier and not even air fleets can come that way. By sea the route is long and intricate and full of danger as narrow straits have to be passed. Japan's invasion of India can only be a practical proposition if China has been completely crushed, and the USA, the Soviet Union and England have been effectively humbled. That is a large undertaking.

Thus we see that normally speaking there is no great or obvious danger of external invasion. Still we live in an abnormal world, full of wars and aggression, when international law has ceased to be and treaties and undertakings have no value, and an unabashed gangsterism prevails among nations. We realize that anything may happen in this epoch of revolution and wars, and the only thing to be done to protect oneself is to rely on one's own strength as well as to have a policy of peace. Risks have to be taken whatever the path we follow. We are prepared to take them. There is indeed no other way.

We do not underestimate the difficulties before us. We have a hard task, hard because of external opposition, harder still because of our own weaknesses. It is always more difficult to fight one's own failings than the strength of the adversary. We have to do both. We have social evils with the authority of long tradition and habit behind them. We have the elements which have gone to build up fascism in other countries. We have inertia and a tame submission to fate and its decrees. But we have also a new awakening of the vital spirit of India.

The static vegetative period is over and a hunger for change and the ending of their misery and poverty has seized the masses. The world is shaken by war and alarms of war and no one knows what horror and inhuman cruelty and destruction of human progress the future holds for us. But whatever that may be, India will no longer be merely a passive instrument of destiny or of another's will.

In the subconscious mind of India there is much questioning, a struggle and a crisis. As of old, it seeks a synthesis of the past and the present, of the old and the new. It sees the new industrial civilization marching irresistibly on; it distrusts it and dislikes it to some extent for it is an attack against and an upheaval of so much that is old; yet it has accepted it as an inevitable development. But still it seeks to synthesize it with its own fundamental conceptions, to find a harmony between the inner man and this ever-changing outer environment. That harmony is strangely lacking in the world today and all of us seek blindly for it, and till we find it we shall have to march wearily through the deserts of conflict and hatred and mutual destruction.

10

Aiming at A Democratic India[1]

Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have come back after a long while to my home town of Allahabad to which I have almost become a stranger. During these past 15 months I have lived in New Delhi, next door to Old Delhi city. What do these two cities convey to us, what pictures and thoughts do they bring to our minds? When I think of them, the long vista of India's history stretches out before me, not so much the succession of kings and emperors but rather that of the inner life of a nation, its cultural activities in many fields, its spiritual adventures and its voyages in the realms of thought and action. The life of a nation, and more specially of a nation like India, is lived principally in the villages. Nevertheless, it is the cities that represent the highest cultural achievements of the age, as they also do sometimes the most unpleasant aspects of human life. So these cities remind me of the cultural growth of India, of that inner strength and balance which come from long ages of civilization and culture. We have been very proud of this inheritance of ours in India, and rightly so. And yet, where do we stand today?

It is well that we put this question to ourselves in this ancient city of Allahabad, in this seat of learning. The universities have much to teach in the modern world and their scope of activity ever enlarges. I am myself a devotee of science and believe that the world will ultimately be saved, if it is to be saved, by the methods and approach of science. But whatever path of learning we may pursue, and however profitable it might seem to us, there is a certain basis and foundation without which the house of learnings is built on shifting sands. It is for a university to realize and to lay stress on this essential basis and foundations, these standards of thought and action, which make an individual and a nation.

Above all, this is necessary today, during this extremely rapid phase of transition, when old values have almost left us and we have adopted no new ones. Freedom came to us, our long-sought freedom, and it came with a minimum of violence. But immediately after, we had to wade through oceans

[1] Convocation address at the Diamond Jubilee of the Allahabad University, 13 December 1947. SWJN, Vol. 4 (II Series), pp. 205–8.

of blood and tears. Worse than the blood and tears was the shame and disgrace that accompanied them. Where were our values and standards then, where was our old culture, our humanism and spirituality and all that India has stood for in the past? Suddenly darkness descended upon this land and madness seized the people. Fear and hatred blinded our minds and all the restraints which civilization imposes were swept away. Horror piled on horror and a sudden emptiness seized us at the brute savagery of human beings. The light seemed all to go but, not all, for a few still flickered in the raging tempest. We sorrowed for the dead and the dying and for those whose suffering was greater than that of death. We sorrowed even more for India, our common Mother for whose freedom we had laboured these long years.

The lights seemed to go out. But one bright flame continued to burn and shed its light on the surrounding gloom. And looking at the pure flame, strength and hope returned to us and we felt that whatever momentary disaster might overwhelm our people, there was the spirit of India, strong and unsullied, rising above the turmoil of the present and not caring for the petty exigencies of the day. How many of you realize what it has meant to India to have the presence of Mahatma Gandhi during these months? We all know of his magnificent services to India and to freedom during the past half century and more. But no service could have been greater than what he has performed during the past four months when, in a dissolving world, he has been like a rock of purpose and a lighthouse of truth, and his firm low voice has risen above the clamours of the multitude, pointing out the path of rightful endeavour.

And because of this bright flame we could not lose faith in India and her people. And yet the surrounding gloom was in itself a menace. Why should we relapse into this gloom when the sun of freedom had arisen? It is necessary for all of us, and more especially for young men and young women in the universities, to pause and think for a while on these basic matters, for the future of India is taking shape in this present, and the future is going to be what millions of young men and women want it to be. There is today a narrowness and intolerance and insensitiveness and lack of awareness which rather frighten me. We have recently passed through a great world war. That war has not brought peace and freedom, but it should teach us many lessons. It brought the downfall of what had been called fascism and Nazism. Both of these creeds were narrow and overbearing and based on hatred and violence. I watched their growth in their respective countries as well as elsewhere. They brought a certain prestige to their people for a while, but they also killed the spirit and destroyed all values and standards of thought and behaviour. They ended by ruining the nations they sought to exalt.

I see something very similar to that flourishing in India today. It talks in the name of nationalism, sometimes of religion and culture and yet it is the very opposite of nationalism, of true morality and of real culture. If there was any

doubt of this, the past few months have shown us the real picture. For some years we have had to contend against this policy of hatred and violence and narrow communalism on the part of a section of the community. Now that section has succeeded in forming a state carved out of certain parts of India. Muslim communalism, which had been such a danger and obstruction to Indian freedom, now calls itself a state. It has ceased to be a living force in India proper today, because its strength is concentrated in other parts. But it has resulted in degrading other sections of the community who seek to copy it and sometimes even to improve upon it.

We have now to face this reaction in India and the cry is raised for a communal state, even though the words used may be different. And not only is the communal state demanded but in all fields of political and cultural activity the same narrowing and strangling demand is put forward.

If we look back at India's long history, we find that our forefathers made wonderful progress whenever they looked out at the world with clear and fearless eyes and kept the windows of their minds open to give and to receive. And, in later periods when they grew narrow in outlook and shrunk from outside influences, India suffered a setback politically and culturally. What a magnificent inheritance we have got, though we have abused it often enough. India has been and is a vital nation, in spite of all the misery and suffering she has experienced. That vitality, in the realm of constructive and creative effort, spread to many parts of the Asian world and elsewhere and brought splendid conquests in its train. These conquests were not so much of the sword as of the mind and the heart, which bring healing and which endure when the men of the sword and their work are forgotten. But that very vitality, if not rightly and creatively directed, may turn inward and destroy and degrade.

Even during the brief span of our lives we have seen these two forces at play in India and the world at large—the force of constructive and creative effort and the force of destruction. Which will triumph in the end? And on which side do we stand? That is a vital question for each one of us and more especially for those from whom the leaders of the nation will be drawn and on whom the burden of tomorrow will fall.

We dare not sit on the fence and refuse to face the issue. We dare not allow our minds to be filled with passion and hatred when clear thought and effective action are necessary.

What kind of India are we working for? And what kind of world? Are hatred and violence and fear and communalism and narrow provincialism to mould our future? Surely not, if there has been any truth in us and in our professions. Here in this city of Allahabad, dear to me not only because of my close association with it but also because of its part in India's history, my boyhood and youth were spent in dreaming dreams and seeing visions of India's future. Was there any real substance in those dreams or were they merely the

fancies of a fevered brain? Some small part of these dreams has come true but not in the manner I had imagined and so much still remains. Instead of a feeling of triumph at the achievement, there is an emptiness and distress at the sorrow that surrounds us and we have to wipe the tears from a million eyes.

A university stands for humanism, for tolerance, for reason, for progress, for the adventure of ideas and for the search of truth. It stands for the onward march of the human race towards even higher objectives. If universities discharge their duty adequately, then it is well with the nation and the people. But if the temple of learning itself becomes a home of narrow bigotry and petty objectives, how, then, will a nation prosper or a people grow in stature?

A vast responsibility, therefore, rests on our universities and educational institutions and those, who guide their destinies, have to keep their lights burning and must not stray from the right path even when passion convulses the multitude and blinds many among those whose duty it is to set an example to others. We are not going to reach our goal through crookedness or flirting with evil in the hope that it may lead to good. The right end can never be fully achieved through wrong means.

Let us be clear about our national objective. We aim at a strong, free and democratic India, where every citizen has an equal place and full opportunity of growth and service, where present-day inequalities in wealth and status have ceased to be, where our vital impulses are directed to creative and cooperative endeavour. In such an India communalism, separatism, isolationism, untouchability, bigotry and exploitation of man by man have no place, and, while religion is free, it is not allowed to interfere with the political and economic aspects of a nation's life. If that is so, then all this business of Hindu and Muslim and Christian and Sikh must cease so far as our political life is concerned, and we must build a united but composite nation where both individual and national freedoms are secure.

We have passed through grievous trials. We have survived them, but at a terrible cost; and the legacy they have left in tortured minds and stunted souls will pursue us for a long time. Our trials are not over. Let us prepare ourselves for them in the spirit of free and disciplined men and women—stout of heart and purpose—who will not stray from the right path or forget our ideals and objectives. We have to start this work of healing and we have to build and create. The wounded body and spirit of India call upon all of us to dedicate ourselves to this great task. May we be worthy of the task and of India.

11

The Will of the Nation[1]

Our history, and especially the history of Madhya Bharat, is full of the great deeds of our ancestors with which we are connected directly. After all, we are their heirs. How can we be weak? We have to strive to be even better than they. At the same time we have to learn from our ancient history. What were our weaknesses in the past? What were the weaknesses which led to the country's downfall? So we have to look at both sides of the picture and try to learn from them and thus prepare ourselves for the future. We have to keep a picture of that future before us though it cannot be a very definite picture, nor should it be. That picture will be made up of thousands of things and will be drawn not by a single hand, but millions of hands especially in today's democratic world. A single hand, however powerful it may be, cannot draw the picture of the future. So when it is being drawn by millions of hands naturally the picture will keep changing and though it may not be exactly as we want it to be, still we can make it somewhat similar to it if we make an effort for it.

You are aware of the pictures which filled our minds and hearts during the last 25–30 years of the freedom struggle. We dreamt many dreams but all of them have not been realized. Many things happened which hurt our very souls and hurt India. Much still remains to be done and nobody knows how long it will take. But there was one aspect of the dream which concerned the princely States about which it can be said that it has been realized more rapidly than we had expected and that work is still going on. Much remains to be done in the States and in India because the story of a nation is unending. Those of us who are shouldering the responsibility today and doing some work will grow weak in course of time. Our limbs will become weak and then others will take our place. The life of a country is endless. A country is immortal. People come, do some work, serve to the best of their ability and go away. Then others come and keep the torch burning.

Therefore, whatever picture we may keep before us it will keep changing and growing. When a thing stops growing, then comes its end—it dies. When a nation or a people lose their will to grow and become stagnant, then, even if

[1] Speech at the Inaguration of the Union of Madhya Bharat, Gwalior, 28 May 1948. JN Collection, NMML. Excerpts.

they do not die, they come very close to death. If you read the history of India, you will find that whenever India had the will to grow and go ahead, she was very alive and vibrant in every way. There have been great men here like Vikramaditya and Kalidasa. What were those times like? The people's minds were open then and they were prepared to try out new things. So their achievements were great and they forged ahead in every field whether it concerned military or literature or any other. They were a growing people, a growing nation, which left its imprint for thousands of years to come. The whole world felt this influence. Then came a time when, it seems, our country, the big and the small people, became somewhat stagnant in literature and everything else. If you want to look for India's greatness in literature, you have to go back to the ancient times. In the last few hundred years there have been writers but no one of any great importance as they were in the ancient times. Their inspiration seems to have dried up. Life became restricted, people were afraid of progress and we got so tightly bound up with our old shackles that we were unable to put our legs forward and march ahead. The result, inevitably, was that we became weak and were enslaved. If a nation gets tied down to anything, physically or mentally, it decays. No nation can remain static in this world. It either goes forward or slides back. If any country hopes to stay in one position, it will slide back, events will push it backward because the world always moves ahead for good or bad.

Now the time for change has come. How should we face it? If we think that with independence our task is over, we will once again be caught up in our old chains. We have to look ahead, towards progress, and at the same time try to understand the good points of our ancient civilization which have enriched the world. Only by combining the old and the new can we find the right path. There is no other course open to us. I am aware that diverse forces and different ways of thinking are pulling the country in different directions. Some of them are good, some bad. Bad forces sometimes come in such a way and in such garb that they create disillusionment. Some of them are disguised in the garb of India's ancient heritage. But if you look carefully, you will discover that they lay stress on those aspects of our ancient civilization which have pulled us down in the past, and not on those aspects which made us strong and can make us a great nation even today. So we have to consider where we are at present and what is our position because we are passing through a critical period. We have been swimming now for a long time in a very stormy sea with only occasional periods of relief. Again and again we have been washed away. Those of us who had strong arms forged ahead. But we have to understand that the stormy sea has not calmed down yet. We do not know when there will be peace and the storm will cease. . . .

I realize that with the attainment of independence our vision got somewhat blurred. We got entangled in trivialities and meaningless quarrels. This is the

greatest danger that faces us. Please remember that no external enemy can harm us. There is a great deal of strength in us if only we can recognize that strength, and we can face the enemy unitedly. Our greatest enemy is the evil in our hearts and consequently it is most difficult to combat that because it is not easily recognizable and it destroys us from within and weakens us, with the result that when a critical situation arises we find ourselves unable to cope with it. At this juncture we in India have to face this enemy which is within ourselves, which weakens us, leads us into wrong ways, creates hatred and a desire to fight and divides us. . . .

A nation does not progress by its constitution alone nor can it uphold its freedom by granting liberties on paper. It can preserve its freedom only by being strong, by physical and mental strength and, above all, by following the right path. I am not particularly a religious man, but I firmly believe that if a race or a nation or an individual follows a wrong path he will have to bear the consequences. He cannot escape them—there may be delay but the consequences will have to be borne. He has to face them. . . .

The barriers which were there between the princely States and the Indian Provinces in the time of British rule have now been removed, and it is right also because now there is no logic in the existence of States. We cannot exist in isolation, so it is a good thing to establish a close relationship and to march together. I have always felt that on the one hand there should be a close relationship, but, on the other, too much centralization is not good. The more freedom the States have, the better their growth and development will be. They will learn to stand on their own feet and thus increase the strength of the entire country. I would say that even in the sphere of culture and fine arts, it is not good to force the same thing down everybody's throat. Everybody should be given an opportunity to grow freely. Thus there can be unity as well as diversity in the country and both these things lead the country to progress. *Jai Hind.*

12

A Day of Rededication[1]

The 15th of August came and we rejoiced at our achievement in spite of the pain of partition. We looked forward to the sun of freedom, and the opportunity that freedom brings. But though the sun rose it was hidden from us by dark clouds, and for us it remained a twilight hour. It has been a long twilight and the brightness of the day is still to come. For freedom is not a mere matter of political decision or new constitutions, not even a matter of what is more important, that is, economic policy. It is of the mind and heart and if the mind narrows itself and is befogged and the heart is full of bitterness and hatred, then freedom is absent.

Another August 15 has come and it is a solemn day for us in spite of all that has happened. The year has considerable achievement to its credit and we have gone forward some distance along our long journey. But the year is also full of unhappiness and humiliation and of a betrayal of that spirit which has been the redeeming feature of India. This year has seen the triumph of evil in the assassination of the Father of the Nation, and what greater shame and sorrow could there have been for anyone of us than this?

We celebrate this solemn day as we should, but our celebration cannot be one of vainglory and pious platitudes. It must be one of heart-searching and a fresh dedication to our cause. Let us think not so much of what we have done, but of what we have left undone and what we have done wrongly. Let us think of the millions of refugees who, deprived of all they possessed, are still homeless wanderers. Let us think of the masses of India who continue to suffer and who have looked to us with hope and waited patiently for a betterment of their unhappy lot. Let us think also of the mighty resources of India which, if harnessed and utilized for the common good, can change the face of India and make her great and prosperous. To this great task let us address ourselves with all the strength in us. But above all let us remember the great lessons that Mahatma Gandhi taught us and the ideals that he held aloft for us. If we forget those lessons and ideals we betray our cause and our country.

So on this anniversary of our independence we dedicate ourselves anew to the great cause of free India and her people. May we prove worthy! *Jai Hind.*

[1] Message on the eve of the first anniversary of Indian independence, 14 August 1948. *National Herald*, 15 August 1948. SWJN, Vol. 7 (II Series), pp. 169–70.

13

The Innumerable Faces of India[1]

New Delhi, 20 July 1949

My dear Premier,

As I stood in the small gardens or much more frequently the bleak wastes of Ladakh, I thought of the infinite variety of our country. A few days later I was in Calcutta and my thoughts turned to Ladakh and compared and contrasted these two entirely different scenes. There could be no greater difference between any two parts of the earth's surface, however far one travelled. And yet both these were India, as also much else which was different from either. How many of us have an understanding and an emotional appreciation of this tremendous richness and variety of India. Because we do not wholly appreciate this, even though we might talk about it sometimes, we try often enough to regiment the whole of India into a single pattern. Wherever we may be, we think that we are in the heart of India and represent the quintessence of India's culture and tradition, and that the others are rather near the outer pale and their chief function is to fall in line with us. That approach seems to me to be far from reality, and to ignore not only the facts as they are in India, but also the age-long tradition of India which allowed each culture to have scope for growth and did not try to coerce it into a single pattern. Modern conditions of life, new methods of swift transportation and communication, inevitably tend to produce a certain uniformity and regimentation. Whether that is a good thing or not, maybe a matter for argument. But deliberate attempts to accelerate this process are hardly likely to succeed, and in the measure they succeed they may deaden something that is bright and make lustreless what has been vital in our national life.

All these thoughts came to me in Ladakh and I further thought how wise our ancestors were in their large-hearted tolerance and human understanding. It would be well with India, I mused, if we of the present generation had also a measure of that tolerance and human touch. Culture, like a flower, does not take kindly to forced growth, and, like a flower again, it fades away in an environment not suited to it; compulsion crushes it and makes it lifeless.

[1] To Chief Ministers, SWJN, Vol. 12 (II Series). Excerpts.

Ladakh is a far-away corner of India, yet it is India. Kashmir proper is nearer in every way, geographically and otherwise to India, and yet it has its peculiar characteristics, quite apart from its astonishing beauty. It has been in the past one of the greatest seats of old Indian culture, and yet because of the very environment, it developed in its own way. Inevitably even the external emblem of our life like food and clothing differ somewhat with geography and climate. India is considered generally a country where it is normally hot. That of course is true. But India also has the high mountains and the snow-covered peaks and people who live in these colder climates put on fur-lined boots and heavy coats, or else they would not survive. India therefore displays both the bare foot or the *chappal* encasing it and these fur-lined boots of the north. Vast numbers of Indians wear the *dhoti* in various forms. Yet this dress is an impossible one in the mountain valleys of the north where in winter the temperature is far below zero and even in summer bitterly cold winds blow.

So, as we build the mighty structure of free and Republican India, let us remember all these innumerable faces that India has and provide for them. Let us not try to remould any of them forcibly to conform to our particular conception of what India is.

I have many impressions of my visit to Ladakh, but three stand out. The first is of my flying over the Himalayas and looking down at a magnificent spectacle of ice-covered peaks, glaciers and snow-fields. That is a sight I can never forget. My second picture is that of a vast wilderness of sand and rock with occasional caves on the banks of the Indus or where water came down from the glaciers. Across these sandy wastes we travelled sometimes slowly and wearily and sometimes galloping as fast as the mountain ponies would carry us. At brief intervals we would come across a monastery, usually perched on a hill top, commanding a view of the surrounding country. That monastery looked as if it was a natural growth from the rock itself. It fitted in with that bare and bleak scene.

My third memory of Ladakh is that of a moonlit night on the banks of the Indus. The river shone like burnished silver and in the background there were mountains with snow on their peaks, also glistening in the moonlight. The Indus, which gave India her name, and which, in its later stages, becomes a mighty river, sweeping down to the sea, was here a mountain stream with something of the frolic and playfulness of youth. The sound of its flowing waters was very pleasant to hear, even as the sight of its glistening surface was a delight to the eyes.

From this part of India, where nature is dominant and triumphant, I went to Calcutta, where five or six million human beings now dwell. The scene changed completely and problems that faced me there were utterly different. Here nature was not very obvious, only man and his works and his conflicts were evident. West Bengal, like Ladakh, was also a frontier province of India, a frontier created rather brutally by the partition. As a result of that partition

it had suffered greatly and had become the most densely populated province of India. It was a province which was far more urban in its general outlook than any other province of India. Indeed a very large part of this population lived in the great city of Calcutta. Unemployment of the lower middle classes especially had risen very greatly and there was a general sense of frustration and annoyance at the new turn of the wheel of fate and at those who were supposed to ignore the claims of Bengal. Many people outside Bengal are apt to pay little attention to this deep-seated malaise of that Province. But it would be wrong and foolish not to try to understand what is passing through the mind and soul of West Bengal today, and it would be ungenerous for us in the rest of India not to try to help the people of West Bengal in every way possible to us. . . .

West Bengal has many lessons for each province and for all of us in India. So far as the Congress organization is concerned, it demonstrates the fatal consequences of divisions and factions, which weaken and disable the Congress and tend to disintegrate all public life. Such divisions and factions are seldom due to any differences in matters of principle or policy; usually they are caused by personal rivalries and jealousies. If the Congress has to continue as a historic force shaping the destinies of India, it must pull itself up and put an end to these internal divisions. That does not mean suppression of opinions or a regimentation of all those who are within the wide folds of the Congress. But it does mean observance of a certain wider discipline and tolerance and capacity for joint action. . . .

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

14

An Indian Worldview[1]

Only too often we assume that if we glimpse part of a truth about an event or moment, we have succeeded in discovering the entire truth about it. This is so whether in connection with nations or individuals. Both, however, are by far too complicated to sum up in any oversimplified manner.

If one mistakes a part for the whole, making generalizations therefrom, one is bound to fall into endless error. The very part to which one refers as though it were the whole, may indeed, even be in the process of correction or change. Thus, unless one considers any single aspect of an occurrence in relationship to all of its other aspects—that is, relationship of the whole—one may well succeed merely in misrepresenting, rather than interpreting.

No single mind can entirely understand the whole of any nation, or even of any individual. One may express one's opinion about one phase or another. Yet all expressions of opinion based on partial observation necessarily must be of casual, rather than profound importance.

We are prone to judge things—even, at times, to be intolerant about them—because of our own preconceived notions. We are apt to find precisely what we expect to find wherever we go, without even attempting to see what is actually before us.

Often I find myself saying to those who come to India, especially to Americans, 'You will discover here precisely what you expect to discover. Wherever you go, after all what you see depends on what you bring with you, on what you carry within you.'

Let us say that you go to Banaras. There you can find the most disturbing conditions. I dislike this as much as anyone. Yet, if that is all that you see you will not truly have seen Banaras. Certainly that is by no means all that I see when I go there. Rather, a thousand pictures come to the mind—pictures relating to the last thousands of years. I think of how Banaras was already a living cultural

[1] This interview with Jawaharlal Nehru was recorded by Dorothy Norman, an American journalist and a friend of the Nehru family, probably during a visit to India in the autumn of 1952. Norman wrote a letter to Nehru on 16 March 1953, enclosing the script of the interview, to which Nehru responded on 10 May, approving the text. JN Collection, NMML.

centre some 3000 years ago and of how, even that long ago, people came there from far and near to discuss new ideas. It was, one must remember, in Banaras that Buddha gave his first sermon.

India has a variety of faces. In describing none of them is one able to give a completely accurate picture of the land as a whole. In my own book,[2] for example, I attempted to put down what I understood about the country at the time. I have no idea whether I truly understood India then, or whether I understand it even now. Just as I have no idea whether I understand any single individual.

Even when one looks in the eyes of most of one's friends, one finds that, one doubtless is looking into the eyes of strangers. One sees what one is capable of seeing. No more. Of course the trained observer will see more than will others. This is true also of the artist, but, even so, the botanist, the chemist—each will find something quite different from what even the artist will find.

It is dangerous to generalize about so vast a nation as India. One can say that, just as various parts of England or France or Germany or China differ from one another, so do various regions of India. On the other hand, one can say that despite differences between, let us say, north and south India, there is a bond between these two areas—a vast common background that has helped to mould both of them. But to complicate matters still further, one finds that, although at home Indians from different parts of the country may seem to vary considerably, when one sees them in a foreign land they strike one as being surprisingly similar.

Pakistanis and Indians, for example, have, in large measures, spoken the same language and been moulded by the same forces for centuries. Yet, politics aside, if they go to a foreign land, it is difficult to tell them apart. But, even so, I still maintain it is difficult to make generalizations either about India or Indians.

In answer to the observation that there is a vast difference between the traditions of India and those of the West, it is not easy to give any simple reply. It is often maintained that the Indian is more 'detached' than others. But then virtually every great philosopher, in every country, in every era, in every tradition, has spoken in favour of detachment.

One of the most important of India's traditional documents—the *Bhagavad Gita*—stresses detachment. But that is not at all to say that it favours inaction. It maintains rather that even when one must kill in battle, one must remain apart from the act one performs.

I cannot see how this differs from the normal ideas of civilization and culture held throughout the rest of the world.

In every truly civilized person there is always a certain amount of restraint.

[2] *The Discovery of India* (first published in 1946 by The Signet Press, Calcutta).

This is not to say that when one acts one is devoid of feeling about what one does. A civilized person behaves politely even if he wishes to shout. What is true about petty forms of behaviour is true about one's larger actions. Restraint and detachment are favoured in all developed cultures. One should not allow one's mind to get out of control. If one is civilized and cultivated, one is swept away by neither good news nor bad.

Let us say that suddenly one develops a hatred for someone. The cultured person will not permit this feeling to dominate him, to run with him. When one begins to feel hatred for someone it is necessary to realize that one may not know fully about everything involved. One may lack sufficient knowledge about the person's background, about the motives that have impelled him to act, about the provocation for what has been done that may well have repelled one. One may not know what training the person has had, perhaps he has not had an opportunity to develop in a manner that would arouse one's approval.

As one becomes tolerant and restrained in arriving at conclusions one simply is demonstrating the ordinary, civilized aspects of detachment. Yet, even when one becomes detached in the deepest, most civilized sense of the word, this does not necessarily mean that one has become an ascetic or a hermit—that one is running away from life, or putting oneself physically away from life. It means rather to be in the fire, yet to remain cool.

It was Albert Schweitzer[3] I believe, who, in comparing Eastern and Western philosophy, observed that the basic Indian idea is one of renunciation or avoidance, as opposed to western acceptance of life. This is only partially, but not basically, correct. I do not really see how one can talk about essential differences in this manner. For surely among the early Christians there were hermits, monks, nuns. There was the doctrine of renunciation. The fact is, simply, that you will find that there have been certain periods elsewhere, even as in India, when first one approach has been in the ascendancy, then another.

You might say that in India Jainism symbolized the doctrine of renunciation. Some people claim that Buddha also favoured this doctrine. In reality, however, Buddhism symbolized the golden mean—the middle way.

Buddha was against mere renunciation. After he died, of course, his followers took up what he said and made something quite different of it—something that did not necessarily have much to do with what Buddha himself had symbolized.

When one examines the most ancient view of life in India, one finds that a highly systematic way of thinking was followed. But, in no sense can this way be called simply negative.

[3] (1875–1965); missionary surgeon, awarded Nobel Peace Price for 1952; won several national and international prizes and awards since 1949; author of *Indian Thought and Its Development*, 1936, *From My African Notebook*, 1939, *The Problem of Peace in the World of Today* (Nobel Peace Address), 1954. *A Declaration of Conscience*, 1957 and *Peace or Atomic War?*, 1958.

According to the oldest Indian tradition one's life is divided into four parts. There is the period that extends through one's adolescence, in which one is trained and educated for life. Next, one becomes a householder. All of this involves a full acceptance of life and its responsibilities.

During the third phase there is partial withdrawal. This is the period during which one becomes the elder statesman. One is respected and consulted, but one is no longer entangled in life in the same way in which one was involved in the earlier phases.

Then finally, there is the period of complete withdrawal. At this point one gives up property. One does one's thinking at a level completely different from that of earlier periods of one's life. One might say that during this final period one becomes a hermit. But this is very different from being a hermit from boyhood on.

After all, by the third stage of one's life one's own children have grown up. It is then that one hands over responsibility to them, as well as one's property. It is at this point that one becomes free of property oneself.

All this is simply part of the flow of life. It is not renunciation in the superficial sense of the word. The person who hands over his property does not starve. And, as death is approached, there is no longer care, burden, worry, as at earlier stages of life.

As one approaches death one has detached oneself from binding factors. The form of one's life has been moulded with logic and there has been a sense of continuity. The next generation has taken over at the point at which it has properly been prepared to do so. Thus there is no sudden break at the time of one's death. In the final phase of one's life one no longer worries about what one has not done. What has been done is done. This is as it should be.

This has long been considered the ideal division of life by many in India. Some hold on to this tradition even now. But this is not to say that there are not many other ideas about how one should live—here, as elsewhere—or that there have not been many conflicts in our country with respect to the various ideas that have been held.

There always have been different concepts of how one should live. Indeed, there always has been great tolerance in India with respect to this very matter. There never has been any single dogma that has dominated our life. It has always been accepted that no one can know the whole of the truth.

There is no point in worrying too much about whether beliefs held by others happen to differ from one's own. Someone else may have got hold of some part of the truth that differs from the part in which one happens to believe oneself. Why not simply accept this possibility?

It must be remembered that Hinduism is neither a religion nor a dogma. As a matter of fact, six different so-called orthodox philosophers[4]—each

[4] The six philosophical streams are: (i) *Nyaya* (ii) *Vaisheshika* (iii) *Samkhya* (iv) *Yoga* (v) *Purva Mimamsa* and (vi) *Uttara Mimamsa* or *Vedanta.*

somewhat at variance with the others—have evolved in India under this one general heading. No single one, therefore, rightly can be called Hinduism to the exclusion of the others. Moreover, each of the philosophies that has evolved has flowered and faded in its time. One, for example, has been atheistic in character; another semi-atheistic. Buddhism, which might be called more or less atheistic, is itself an offshoot of Hinduism.

In general the Hindu does not aim to proselytize, even though the Buddhists did try to do just that. In some cases images have been worshipped in India, in others not. The important thing, in any event, is that, under the general heading of Hinduism, one can do as one pleases.

I admit that tolerance can have its bad as well as its good aspects. But, then, so can intolerance—as when a person thinks that he alone is right.

Many conflicting ideas have been and continue to be held simultaneously here, as in other parts of the world. There is a difference in outlook not only about traditional ideas, but about modern ones as well. Consider the concept of progress. There are those who believe that the individual—the good man—by his own goodness influences the environment around him, thereby raising it. There are those who maintain that on the contrary the good environment helps to ennoble the individual.

The first belief represents an old idea, the second a more modern notion. Obviously there is some truth to be found in both approaches. Just as there doubtless is some truth to be found in any number of differing philosophies.

Yet which is one to affirm or accept as final and all-inclusive?

Mere passivity in any domain—whether the intellectual, the cultural or the personal—cannot by any stretch of the imagination represent true vitality. Vitality can come only from an acceptance of—and being open to—a multiplicity of forces.

A race, after all, develops slowly. Generally speaking the Chinese (I am not now referring to present-day China, but to Chinese over the ages) have been a vital people. They never have had a dogmatic religion. They have been a people of common sense. They have not gone to extremes. They have been fond of good things, but, in some respects, they may be said to have been callous to their neighbours. How, then, is one to characterize them in any simple fashion? How is one to speak of any group in terms that are static?

Surely in every civilization—age after age—first one set of circumstances and then another will have left its mark on a people, helping to form them. In every culture there is bound to have been accretion upon accretion of influences.

I always think of India, in particular, as something in the nature of a palimpsest—a manuscript first written upon long, long ago. And then, over the original writing throughout the centuries, as the original characters have faded, people have attempted to trace what they thought was there to begin with. So

that by now there has been so much writing over writing that no longer can one be entirely certain that what is offered to one as original tradition is, in fact, identical with what existed in the beginning.

India—perhaps China too—because of the vast, long periods during which these two countries have evolved—are less apt to be swept away by present events than are younger nations. Thus, somehow, the present is to be looked upon simply as one phase in a series of phases. It is to be seen in perspective against the complex panorama of the past.

The events of the present become less overwhelming if seen in such perspective and with a deep faith in the future.

The people always have endured in the past. Perhaps, in certain eras, there has been a failure to rise to great heights. But there is an inherent strength in the people that will continue to cause them to endure.

Naturally I wonder greatly about India. And naturally it is necessary to take our vast historical and cultural background into account, when considering what should be done here in the present. I reply, however, that it is dangerous to oversimplify about this or any other country. For one is, after all, viewing a tremendous picture gallery when one considers anything so vast and complex as this nation or, perhaps, any nation. This is so as much with respect to the present as the past. None of it, one may rightly say, is simple.

15

Synthesis is Our Tradition[1]

To endeavour to understand and describe the India of today would be the task of a brave man. To describe tomorrow's India would verge on rashness.

What is India? That is a question which has come back again and again to my mind. The early beginnings of our history filled me with wonder. It was the past of a virile and vigorous race with a questing spirit and an urge for free inquiry and, even in its earliest known period, giving evidence of a mature and tolerant civilization. Accepting life and its joys and burdens, it was ever searching for the ultimate and the universal. It built up a magnificent language, Sanskrit, and through this language, its arts and architecture, it sent its vibrant message to far countries. It produced the *Upanishads*, the *Gita* and the Buddha.

Hardly any language in the world has probably played that vital part in the history of a race which Sanskrit has. It was not only the vehicle of the highest thought and some of the finest literature, but it became the uniting bond for India, in spite of its political division. The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* were woven into the texture of millions of lives in every generation for thousands of years. I have often wondered, if our race forgot the Buddha, the *Upanishads* and the great epics, what then will it be like! It would be uprooted and would lose the basic characteristics which have clung to it and given it distinction throughout these long ages. India would cease to be India. . . .

Gradually deterioration set in. Thought lost its freshness and became stale, and the vitality and exuberance of youth gave place to crabbed age. Instead of the spirit of adventure there came lifeless routine, and the broad and exciting vision of the world was cabined and confined and lost in caste divisions, narrow social customs and ceremonials. Even so, India was vital enough to absorb the streams of people that flowed into her mighty ocean of humanity and she never quite forgot the thoughts that had stirred her in the days of her youthful vigour.

Subsequently, India was powerfully influenced by the coming of Islam and Muslim invasions. Western colonial powers followed, bringing a new type of domination and a new colonialism and, at the same time, the impact of fresh

[1] From *India Today and Tomorrow,* Azad Memorial Lectures, New Delhi (February 1959). Excerpts.

An expanded essay was carried in the AICC Economic Review, Vol. X, no. 22, 15 March 1959.

ideas and of the industrial civilization that was growing up in Europe. This period culminated, after a long struggle, in independence and now we face the future with all this burden of the past upon us and the confused dreams and stirrings of the future that we seek to build. We have all these ages represented in us and our country today. We have the growth of nuclear science and atomic energy in India, and we also have the cowdung age.

In the tumult and confusion of our time, we stand facing both ways, forward to the future and backwards to the past, being pulled in both directions. How can we resolve this conflict and evolve a structure for living which fulfils our material needs and, at the same time, sustains our mind and spirit? What new ideals or old ideals varied and adapted to the new world can we place before our people, and how can we galvanize the people into wakefulness and action?

For the present, in India we are rightly absorbed in the Five-Year Plans[2] and in a tremendous effort to raise our people's living standards. Economic progress is essential and a prerequisite for any other type of advance. But a doubt creeps into our minds. Is this by itself enough or is something else to be added on to it? The Welfare State is a worthwhile ideal, but it may well be rather drab. The examples of states which have achieved that objective bring out new problems and difficulties, which are not solved by material advance alone or by a mechanical civilization. Whether religion is necessary or not, a certain faith in a worthwhile ideal is essential to give substance to our lives and to hold us together.

Change is essential but continuity is also necessary. The future has to be built on the foundations laid in the past and in the present. To deny the past and break with it completely is to uproot ourselves and, sapless, dry up. It was the virtue of Gandhiji to keep his feet firmly planted in the rich traditions of our race and our soil and, at the same time, to function on the revolutionary plane. Above all, he laid stress on truth and peaceful means. Thus he built on old foundations, and at the same time, oriented the structure towards the future.

When Islam came to India in the form of political conquest it brought conflict. It had a twofold effect. On the one hand, it encouraged the tendency of Hindu society to shrink still further within its shell; on the other, it brought a breath of fresh air and fresh ideals, and thus had a certain rejuvenating influence. Hindu society had become a closed system. The Muslims who came from outside brought their own closed system with them. Hence the great problem that faced India during the medieval period was how these two closed systems, each with its strong roots, could develop a healthy relationship. Wise rulers like Akbar and others realized that the only hope for the future lay in some kind of harmony being established.

[2] The first Five-Year Plan extended from 1 April 1951 to 1 April 1956, and the second from 1956 to 1961.

The philosophy and the world outlook of the old Hindus was amazingly tolerant; and yet they had divided themselves up into numerous separate caste groups and hierarchies. The Muslims had to face a new problem, namely how to live with others as equals. In other countries where they had gone, their success was so great that this problem did not really arise. They came into conflict with Christendom and through hundreds of years the problem was never solved. In India, slowly a synthesis was developed. But before this could be completed, other influences came into play. . . .

The new liberal thought of the West and industrial processes began to affect the mind and life of India. A new nationalism developed, which was inevitably against colonialism and sought independence, and yet which was being progressively affected by the new industrial civilization as well as the language, literature and ways of the West. . . .

Rammohun Roy came, seeking some kind of a synthesis between old India and modern trends. Vivekananda brought back something of the vigour of old Indian thought and dressed it in a modern garb. Political and cultural movements grew up and culminated in Gandhiji and Rabindranath Tagore.

In Europe there had been a fierce conflict between science and traditional religion, and the cosmology of Christianity did not fit in at all with scientific theories. Science did not produce that sense of conflict in India and Indian philosophy could easily accept it without doing any vital injury to its basic conceptions. . . .

In India, as elsewhere, two forces developed—the growth of nationalism and the urge for social justice. Socialism and Marxism became the symbol of this urge for social justice and, apart from their scientific content, had a tremendous emotional appeal for the masses.

Living is a continual adjustment to changing conditions. The rapidity of technological change in the last half century has made the necessity of social change greater than ever, and there is a continual maladjustment. The advance of science and technology makes it definitely possible to solve most of the economic problems of the world and, in particular, to provide the primary necessities of life to everyone all over the world. The methods adopted will have to depend upon the background and cultural development of a country or a community.

Internationally, the major question today is that of world peace. The only course open is for us to accept the world as it is and develop toleration for each other. It should be open to each country to develop in its own way, learning from others, and not being imposed on by them. Essentially, this calls for a new mental approach. The Panchsheel, or the Five Principles, offer that approach.[3]

There are conflicts within a nation. In a democratic apparatus with adult suffrage, those conflicts can be solved by normal constitutional methods.

[3] The Five Principles are (1) mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and

In India we have had most distressing spectacles of conflict based on provincialism or linguism. In the main, it is conflict of class interests that poses problems today, and in such cases vested interests are not easy to displace. Yet we have seen in India powerful vested interests like those of the old princes and of the big jagirdars, talukdars and zamindars being removed by peaceful methods, even though that meant a break-up of a well-established system which favoured a privileged few. While, therefore, we must recognize that there is class conflict, there is no reason why we should not deal with it through these peaceful methods. They will only succeed, however, if we have a proper objective in view clearly understood by the people.

We have deliberately laid down as our objective a socialist pattern of society. Personally I think that the acquisitive society, which is the base of capitalism, is no longer suited to the present age. We have to evolve a higher order more in keeping with modern trends and conditions and involving not so much competition but much greater cooperation. We have accepted socialism as our goal not only because it seems to us right and beneficial but because there is no other way for the solution of our economic problems. It is sometimes said that rapid progress cannot take place by peaceful and democratic methods. I do not accept this proposition. Indeed, in India today any attempt to discard democratic methods would lead to disruption and would thus put an end to any immediate prospect of progress.

The mighty task that we have undertaken demands the fullest cooperation from the masses of our people. The change we seek necessitates burdens on our people, even on those who can least bear them; unless they realize that they are partners in the building of a society which will bring them benefits, they will not accept these burdens or give their full cooperation.

Whether in land or industry, or in the governmental apparatus, institutional changes become necessary from time to time as functions change. A new set of values will replace those that have governed the old acquisitive society based on the profit motive. The problem before us is ultimately to change the thinking and activities of hundreds of millions of people, and to do this democratically by their consent.

India today presents a very mixed picture of hope and anguish, of remarkable advances and at the same time of inertia, of a new spirit and also the dead hand of the past and of privilege, of an overall and growing unity and many disruptive tendencies. Withal there is a great vitality and a ferment in people's mind and activities.

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sovereignty; (2) non-aggression; (3) non-interference in each other's internal affairs; (4) equality and mutual advantage; and (5) peaceful coexistence and economic cooperation.

The principles of the Panchsheel Pact were enunciated in the Sino-Indian Agreement on trade with Tibet in April 1954.

It is a remarkable thing that a country and a people rooted in the remote past, who have shown so much resistance to change in the past, should now be marching forward rapidly and with resolute steps.

What will emerge from the labour and the tumults of the present generation? I cannot say what will tomorrow's India be like. I can only express my hopes and wishes. I want India to advance on the material plane—to fulfil her Five-Year Plans to raise the standards of living of her vast population. I want the narrow conflicts of today in the name of religion or caste, language or province, to cease, and a classless and casteless society to be built up where every individual has full opportunity to grow according to his worth and ability. In particular, I hope that the curse of caste will be ended, for there cannot be either democracy or socialism on the basis of caste.

Four great religions have influenced India—two emerging from her own thought, Hinduism and Buddhism, and two coming from abroad but establishing themselves firmly in India, Christianity and Islam. Science today challenges the old concept of religion. But if religion deals not with dogmas and ceremonials, but rather with the higher things of life, there should be no conflict with science or inter se between religions. It might be the high privilege of India to help in bringing about this synthesis. That would be in India's ancient tradition inscribed on Asoka's edicts.

Tomorrow's India will be what we make it by today's labours. We have started on this pilgrimage with strong purpose and good heart, and we shall reach the end of the journey, however long that might be.

What I am concerned with is not merely our material progress, but the quality and depth of our people. Gaining power through industrial processes, will they lose themselves in the quest of individual wealth and soft living? That would be a tragedy, for that would be a negation of what India has stood for in the past and, I hope, in the present time also as exemplified by Gandhiji.

Can we combine the progress of science and technology with this progress of the mind and spirit also? We cannot be untrue to science, because that represents the basic fact of life today. Still less can we be untrue to those essential principles for which India has stood in the past throughout the ages.

16

India—Old and New[1]

India is a curious mixture of an amazing diversity and an abiding unity. It has been fashioned by the initial urge of the Indian people at the dawn of history which has persisted through the ages and which has given them a certain individuality; it has also been moulded by repeated impacts from outside. Throughout this long period of history, people have come to India from abroad and influenced their thinking and the ways of living of the Indian people, thus producing a composite culture which has yet been based on the initial urge that carried our people forward. Today there is the powerful impact of the industrialized West, and India herself is becoming rapidly an industrial nation absorbing science and technology. There can be no doubt that this new urge for industrialization or the adoption of modern techniques will succeed and change the face of India. How far this will affect what might be called the basic individuality and uniqueness of India is a question which the future alone can answer.

. . . But the fascinating question for all of us, not only for Indians but also for others, is what the final outcome will be in this conflict between the past and the changing present. There can be no doubt that India will be industrialized and will take on progressively more and more the appearance of a modern industrialized society. In doing so she will shed many of her superstitions and past practices and develop a new dynamism, as indeed she is doing today. But I doubt very much if this change will result in her losing her individuality, which has been her traditional feature throughout her history. Indeed, it would be a pity if she lost her uniqueness and individuality and became merely a copy of the industrialized West.

. . . India has always seemed to me to have broadly more the feminine qualities than the masculine. Of course, masculine qualities are there and have played an important part in her history. Nevertheless, the feminine qualities seem to me to predominate. Essentially she is gentle and peaceful even though on occasions she may indulge in brutal and callous behaviour. That is why I think that Indian women, from whatever part of the country one may select

[1] Foreword to *India, the Country and Its Traditions* by Jean Filliozat (1962). Excerpts.

them, represent the essence of India, more perhaps than the men. Indian women have excelled in her history in many of the masculine qualities, even in war. But essentially they have remained feminine. We have today brilliant women scholars in mathematics and physics. And yet they do not lose their femininenes.

By the coming of modern techniques and industrialization both rural and, even more so, urban, India is changing fast. I have described the India of today elsewhere as being in the bicycle age. I have done so because the bicycle is now everywhere to be seen in the villages. If I address a public meeting in a rural area, thousands of people come to it on bicycles. It is perhaps a greater change to take to the bicycle from the bullock than the automobile from the bicycle. Yet the bullock cart persists just as primitive ploughs persist at the same time as modern ploughs and tractors. The curious thing about India is the persistence of the old and the new at the same time; all the centuries seem to be represented in the India of today. There does not seem to be any obvious conflict between them. They coexist, though undoubtedly the past and its methods are giving place to the new.

This concept of coexistence, in the political sphere, is thus basic to Indian thinking. It is not an outcome of some balancing feat of today. It fits in with the basic philosophy that has come down to us. We have not been, broadly speaking, a proselytizing people. We accept other religions and faiths tolerantly. We do not think that our view must necessarily prevail over others. There are many aspects of truth, and how can we presume to limit it to one particular aspect which appeals to us?

The political revolution which led to the independence of India was a major event in our life. And yet it was not quite complete till the French and Portuguese enclaves in India became parts of independent India. It is only now when these enclaves have become absorbed in India that the political revolution is complete.

Indian nationalism, however, had always a broader basis than the achievement of freedom for India. Even as India had been the classic land for modern imperialism, the freedom of India was looked upon by us as a forerunner of the freedom of all other colonial territories. Also our nationalism had an economic aspect. We have been too powerfully influenced by the poverty and economic backwardness of India to think of political changes only. Inevitably, being an agricultural country to begin with our agrarian policy absorbed our attention. This resulted in the abolition of landlordism and the creation of peasant proprietors linked together by the cooperative movement. In industry we were inevitably led to state-owned or cooperative industries. Even though we gave freedom to the private sector in industry, our broad outlook was governed by the dominance of the public sector, and the progressive growth of a socialist pattern of society.

To this end we have fashioned our Five-Year Plans. Industrialization has become essential in order to get rid of our poverty and unemployment, and the base of this is the development of heavy industries and the training of our people. Mass education, in addition to specialized and technical education, has grown greatly in recent years, and is likely to cover the entire school-going population soon.

The measure of our general progress can be seen by the marked progress made in the average age of the expectation of life. Previous to independence this was thirty-two; now it is forty-eight, in spite of the vast growth in our population. This is not only due to better health services and the eradication of some widespread diseases such as malaria, but also to the consumption of more and better food.

Perhaps the most revolutionary feature in India today is the spread of what is called Panchayati Raj in the rural areas. This has led to the decentralization of authority and giving of greater power and resources to the village organizations. Also there is a great spread of the cooperative movement. Primarily this is meant to better our agriculture and to encourage various development schemes in the rural areas. But, in the final analysis, it is aimed at the improvement of the individual and making him more self-reliant. Democracy is thus spreading down to the hundreds of millions of our people in the villages, and the old curse of officialdom is lessening.

To us in India this is a fascinating and absorbing spectacle. I believe it is important to the rest of the world too at a time when authoritarian and military rule is playing an important part in many parts of the world, especially in Asia and Africa. It is significant that in India we are proceeding on democratic lines and doing so with a large measure of success. We are not only industrializing the country through democratic processes, but also, at the same time, trying to maintain the unique features in Indian philosophy and way of life and the individuality of India. Thus we believe we shall serve the Indian people best and perhaps the rest of the world also.

II

Culture and Civilization

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1

The Lesson of History[1]

5 January 1931

Man's growth from barbarism to civilization is supposed to be the theme of history. In some of my letters I have tried to show you how the idea of cooperation or working together has grown, and how our ideal should be to work together for the common good. But sometimes, looking at great stretches of history, it is difficult to believe that this ideal has made much progress or that we are very much civilized or advanced. There is enough of want of cooperation today, of one country or people selfishly attacking or oppressing another, of one man exploiting another. If after millions of years of progress we are still so backward and imperfect, how much longer will it take us to learn to behave as sensible and reasonable persons? Sometimes we read about past periods of history which seem to be better than ours, more cultured and civilized even, and this makes us doubt if our world is going forward or backward. Our own country has surely had brilliant periods in the past, far better in every way than our present.

It is true that there have been brilliant periods in the past in many countries—in India, Egypt, China, Greece, and elsewhere—and that many of these countries have relapsed and gone back. But even this should not make us lose heart. The world is a big place and the rise and fall of any country for a while may not make much difference to the world at large.

Many people nowadays are apt to boast of our great civilization and of the wonders of science. Science has indeed done wonders, and the great men of science are worthy of all respect. But those who boast are seldom the great. And it is well to remember that in many ways man has not made very great progress from the other animals. It may be that in certain ways some animals are superior to him still. This may sound a foolish statement, and people who do not know better may laugh at it. . . . We look down upon the insects as almost the lowest of living things, and yet these tiny things have learnt the art of cooperation and of sacrifice for the common good far better than man. Ever since I read of the white ant and of its sacrifices for its comrades, I have developed a soft corner in my heart for it. If mutual cooperation and sacrifice for the good of society

[1] From *Glimpses of World History*, pp. 6–7. Excerpts.

are the tests of civilization, we may say that the white ant and the ant are in this respect superior to man.

In one of our old Sanskrit books there is a verse which can be translated as follows: 'For the family sacrifice the individual, for the community the family, for the country the community, and for the soul the whole world.' What the soul is few of us can know or tell, and each one of us can interpret it in a different way. But the lesson this Sanskrit verse teaches us is the same lesson of cooperation and sacrifice for the larger good. We in India had forgotten this sovereign path to real greatness for many a day, and so we had fallen. But again we seem to have glimpses of it, and all the country is astir. How wonderful it is to see men and women, and boys and girls, smilingly going ahead in India's cause and not caring about any pain or suffering! Well may they smile and be glad, for the joy of serving in a great cause is theirs; and to those who are fortunate comes the joy of sacrifice also. Today we are trying to free India. That is a great thing. But an even greater thing is the cause of humanity itself. And because we feel that our struggle is a part of the great human struggle to end suffering and misery, we can rejoice that we are doing our little bit to help the progress of the world.

2

The Quest of Man[1]

10 June 1932

I should have liked to place vivid images of the past before you, one after another, to make you sense how this world of ours has changed, step by step, and developed and progressed, and sometimes apparently gone back; to make you see something of the old civilizations and how they have risen like the tide and then subsided; to make you realize how the river of history has run on from age to age, continuously, interminably, with its eddies and whirlpools and backwaters, and still rushes on to an unknown sea. I should have liked to take you on man's trail and follow it up from the early beginnings, when he was hardly a man, to today, when he prides himself so much, rather vainly and foolishly, on his great civilization. We did begin that way, you will remember, in the Mussoorie days, when we talked of the discovery of fire and of agriculture, and the settling down in towns, and the division of labour. But the farther we have advanced, the more we have got mixed up with empires and the like, and often we have lost sight of that trail. We have just skimmed over the surface of history. I have placed the skeleton of old happenings before you and I have wished that I had the power to cover it with flesh and blood, to make it living and vital for you.

But I am afraid I have not got that power, and you must rely upon your imagination to work the miracle. Why, then, should I write, when you can read about past history in many good books? Yet, through my doubts I have continued writing, and I suppose I shall still continue. I remember the promise I made to you, and I shall try to fulfil it. But more even than this is the joy that the thought of you gives me when I sit down to write and imagine that you are by me and we are talking to each other.

Of man's trail I have written above, since he emerged stumbling and slouching from the jungle. It has been a long trail of many thousands of years. And yet how short a time it is if you compare it to the earth's story and the ages and aeons of time before man came! But for us man is naturally more interesting than all the great animals that existed before him; he is interesting because he brought a new thing with him which the others do not seem to have had. This was mind—curiosity—the desire to find out and learn. So from the earliest

[1] From *Glimpses of World History*, pp. 176–8. Excerpts.

days began man's quest. Observe a little baby, how it looks at the new and wonderful world about it; how it begins to recognize things and people; how it learns. Look at a little girl; if she is a healthy and wide-awake person she will ask so many questions about so many things. Even so, in the morning of history when man was young and the world was new and wonderful, and rather fearsome to him, he must have looked and stared all around him, and asked questions. Who was he to ask except himself? There was no one else to answer. But he had a wonderful little thing—a mind—and with the help of this, slowly and painfully, he went on storing his experiences and learning from them. So from the earliest times until today man's quest has gone on, and he has found out many things, but many still remain, and as he advances on his trail, he discovers vast new tracts stretching out before him, which show to him how far he is still from the end of his quest—if there is such an end.

What has been this quest of man, and whither does he journey? For thousands of years men have tried to answer these questions. Religion and philosophy and science have all considered them, and given many answers. I shall not trouble you with these answers, for the sufficient reason that I do not know most of them. But, in the main, religion has attempted to give a complete and dogmatic answer, and has often cared little for the mind, but has sought to enforce obedience to its decisions in various ways. Science gives a doubting and hesitating reply, for it is of the nature of science not to dogmatize, but to experiment and reason and rely on the mind of man. I need hardly tell you that my preferences are all for science and the methods of science.

We may not be able to answer these questions about man's quest with any assurance, but we can see that the quest itself has taken two lines. Man has looked outside himself as well as inside; he has tried to understand Nature, and he has also tried to understand himself. The quest is really one and the same, for man is part of Nature. "Know thyself", said the old philosophers of India and Greece; and the *Upanishads* contain the record of the ceaseless and rather wonderful strivings after this knowledge by the old Aryan Indians. The other knowledge of Nature has been the special province of science, and our modern world is witness to the great progress made therein. Science, indeed is spreading out its wings even farther now, and taking charge of both lines of this quest and coordinating them. It is looking up with confidence to the most distant stars, and it tells us also of the wonderful little things in continuous motion—the electrons and protons—of which all matter consists.

The mind of man has carried man a long way in his voyage of discovery. As he has learnt to understand Nature more he has utilized it and harnessed it to his own advantage, and thus he has won more power. But unhappily he has not always known how to use this new power, and he has often misused it. Science itself has been used by him chiefly to supply him with terrible weapons to kill his brother and destroy the very civilization that he has built up with so much labour.

3

Fascination of History[1]

9 August 1933

We have finished, my dear; the long story has ended. I need write no more, but the desire to end off with a kind of flourish induces me to write another letter—the Last Letter!

It was time I finished, for the end of my two-year term draws near. In three and thirty days from today I should be discharged, if indeed I am not released sooner, as the gaoler sometimes threatens to do. The full two years are not over yet, but I have received three and a half months' remission of my sentence, as all well-behaved prisoners do. For I am supposed to be a well-behaved prisoner, a reputation which I have certainly done nothing to deserve. So ends my sixth sentence, and I shall go out again into the wide world, but to what purpose? *A quoi bon*? When most of my friends and comrades lie in gaol and the whole country seems a vast prison.

What a mountain of letters I have written! And what a lot of good *swadeshi* ink I have spread out on swadeshi paper. Was it worthwhile, I wonder? Will all this paper and ink convey any message to you that will interest you? You will say, yes, of course, for you will feel that any other answer might hurt me, and you are too partial to me to take such a risk. But whether you care for them or not, you cannot grudge me the joy of having written them, day after day, during these two long years. It was winter when I came. Winter gave place to our brief spring, slain all too soon by the summer heat; and then, when the ground was parched and dry and men and beasts panted for breath, came the monsoon, with its bountiful supply of fresh and cool rain-water. Autumn followed, and the sky was wonderfully clear and blue and the afternoons were pleasant. The year's cycle was over, and again it began: winter and spring and summer and the rainy season. I have sat here, writing to you and thinking of you, and watched the seasons go by, and listened to the pit-a-pat of the rain on my barrack roof

O doux bruit de la pluie,
Parterre et sur les toits!
Pour un cœur qui s'ennuie,
Oh! le chant de la pluie!

[1] From the *Glimpses of World History*, 1934, pp. 984–9.

Benjamin Disraeli, the great English statesman of the nineteenth century, has written: 'Other men condemned to exile and captivity, if they survive, despair; the man of letters may reckon those days as the sweetest of his life.' He was writing about Hugo Grotius, a famous Dutch jurist and philosopher of the seventeenth century, who was condemned to imprisonment for life, but managed to escape after two years. He spent these two years in prison in philosophic and literary work. There have been many famous literary gaolbirds, the two best known perhaps being the Spaniard, Cervantes, who wrote *Don Quixote*, and the Englishman, John Bunyan, the author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

I am not a man of letters, and I am not prepared to say that the many years I have spent in gaol have been the sweetest in my life, but I must say that reading and writing have helped me wonderfully to get through them. I am not a literary man, and I am not a historian; what , indeed, am I? I find it difficult to answer that question. I have been a dabbler in many things; I began with science at college, and then took to the law, and, after developing various other interests in life, finally adopted the popular and widely practised profession of gaol-going in India!

You must no take what I have written in these letters as the final authority on any subject. A politician wants to have a say on every subject, and he always pretends to know much more than he actually does. He has to be watched carefully! These letters of mine are but superficial sketches joined together by a thin thread. I have rambled on, skipping centuries and many important happenings, and then pitching my tent for quite a long time on some event which interested me. As you will notice, my likes and dislikes are pretty obvious, and so also sometimes are my moods in gaol. I do not want you to take all this for granted; there may, indeed, be many errors in my accounts. A prison, with no libraries or reference books at hand, is not the most suitable place in which to write on historical subjects. I have had to rely very largely on the many note-books which I have accumulated since I began my visits to gaol twelve years ago. Many books have also come to me here; they have come and gone, for I could not collect a library here. I have shamelessly taken from these books facts and ideas; there is nothing original in what I have written. Perhaps occasionally you may find my letters difficult to follow; skip those parts, do not mind them. The grown-up in me got the better of me sometimes, and I wrote as I should not have done.

I have given you the barest outline; this is not history; they are just fleeting glimpses of our long past. If history interests you, if you feel some of the fascination of history, you will find your way to many books which will help you to unravel the threads of past ages. But reading books alone will not help. If you would know the past you must look upon it with sympathy and with understanding. To understand a person who lived long ago, you will have to understand his environment, the conditions under which he lived, the ideas that filled his mind. It is absurd for us to judge of past people as if they lived now and

thought as we do. There is no one to defend slavery today, and yet the great Plato held that slavery was essential. Within recent times scores of thousands of lives were given in an effort to retain slavery in the United States. We cannot judge the past from the standards of the present. Everyone will willingly admit this. But everyone will not admit the equally absurd habit of judging the present by the standards of the past. The various religions have especially helped in petrifying old beliefs and faiths and customs, which may have had some use in the age and country of their birth, but which are singularly unsuitable in our present age.

If, then, you look upon past history with the eye of sympathy, the dry bones will fill up with flesh and blood, and you will see a mighty procession of living men and women and children in every age and every clime, different from us and yet very like us, with much the same human virtues and human failings. History is not a magic show, but there is plenty of magic in it for those who have eyes to see.

Innumerable pictures from the gallery of history crowd our minds. Egypt–Babylon–Nineveh—the old Indian civilizations—the coming of the Aryans to India and their spreading out over Europe and Asia—the wonderful record of Chinese culture—Knossos and Greece—Imperial Rome and Byzantium—the triumphant march of the Arabs across two continents—the renaissance of Indian culture and its decay—the little–known Maya and Aztec civilizations of America—the vast conquests of the Mongols—the Middle Ages in Europe with their wonderful Gothic cathedrals—the coming of Islam to India and the Moghal Empire—the Renaissance of learning and art in western Europe—the discovery of America and the sea-routes to the East—the beginnings of western aggression in the East—the coming of the big machine and the development of capitalism—the spread of industrialism and European domination and imperialism—and the wonders of science in the modern world.

Great empires have risen and fallen and been forgotten by man for thousands of years, till their remains were dug up again by patient explorers from under the sands that covered them. And yet many an idea, many a fancy, has survived and proved stronger and more persistent than the empire.

Egypt's might is tumbled down,
Down a-down the deeps of thought;
Greece is fallen and Troy town,
Glorious Rome hath lost her crown,
Venice's pride is nought.
But the dreams their children dreamed,
Fleeting, unsubstantial, vain,
Shadowy as the shadows seemed,
Airy nothing, as they deemed,
These remain.

So sings Mary Coleridge.

The past brings us many gifts; indeed, all that we have today of culture, civilization, science, or knowledge of some aspects of the truth, is a gift of the distant or recent past to us. It is right that we acknowledge our obligation to the past. But the past does not exhaust our duty or obligation. We owe a duty to the future also, and perhaps that obligation is even greater than the one we owe to the past. For the past is past and done with, we cannot change it; the future is yet to come, and perhaps we may be able to shape it a little. If the past has given us some part of the truth, the future also hides many aspects of the truth, and invites us to search for them. But often the past is jealous of the future and holds us in a terrible grip, and we have to struggle with it to get free to face and advance towards the future.

History, it is said, has many lessons to teach us; and there is another saying that history never repeats itself. Both are true, for we cannot learn anything from it by slavishly trying to copy it, or by expecting it to repeat itself or remain stagnant; but we can learn something from it by prying behind it and trying to discover the forces that move it. Even so, what we get is seldom a straight answer. 'History', says Karl Marx, 'has no other way of answering old questions than by putting new ones.'

The old days were days of faith, blind, unquestioning faith. The wonderful temples and mosques and cathedrals of past centuries could never have been built but for the overpowering faith of the architects and builders and people generally. The very stones that they reverently put one on top of the other, or carved into beautiful designs, tell us of this faith. The old temple spire, the mosque with its slender minarets, the Gothic cathedral—all of them pointing upward with an amazing intensity of devotion, as if offering a prayer in stone or marble to the sky above—thrill us even now, though we may be lacking in that faith of old of which they are embodiments. But the days of that faith are gone, and gone with them is that magic touch in stone. Thousands of temples and mosques and cathedrals continue to be built, but they lack the spirit that made them live during the Middle Ages. There is little difference between them and the commercial offices which are so representative of our age.

Our age is a different one; it is an age of disillusion, of doubt and uncertainty and questioning. We can no longer accept many of the ancient beliefs and customs; we have no more faith in them, in Asia or in Europe or America. So we search for new ways, new aspects of the truth more in harmony with our environment. And we question each other and debate and quarrel and evolve any number of 'isms' and philosophies. As in the days of Socrates, we live in an age of questioning, but that questioning is not confined to a city like Athens; it is worldwide.

Sometimes the injustice, the unhappiness, the brutality of the world oppress us and darken our minds, and we see no way out. With Matthew Arnold,

we feel that there is no hope in the world and that all we can do is to be true to one another.

> For the world which seems
> To lie before us, like a land of dreams,
> So various, so beautiful, so new,
> Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
> Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
> And we are here, as on a darkling plain
> Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
> Where ignorant armies clash by night.

And yet if we take such a dismal view we have not learnt aright the lesson of life or of history. For history teaches us of growth and progress and of the possibility of an infinite advance for man. And life is rich and varied, and though it has many swamps and marshes and muddy places, it has also the great sea, and the mountains, and snow, and glaciers, and wonderful starlit nights (especially in gaol!), and the love of family and friends, and the comradeship of workers in a common cause, and music, and books and the empire of ideas. So that each one of us may well say:

> Lord, though I lived on earth, the child of earth,
> Yet was I fathered by the starry sky.

It is easy to admire the beauties of the universe and to live in a world of thought and imagination. But to try to escape in this way from the unhappiness of others, caring little what happens to them, is no sign of courage or fellow-feeling. Thought, in order to justify itself, must lead to action. 'Action is the end of thought', says our friend Romain Rolland. 'All thought which does not look towards action is an abortion and a treachery. If then we are the servants of thought we must be the servants of action.'

People avoid action often because they are afraid of the consequences, for action means risk and danger. Danger seems terrible from a distance; it is not so bad if you have a close look at it. And often it is a pleasant companion, adding to the zest and delight of life. The ordinary course of life becomes dull at times, and we take too many things for granted and have no joy in them. And yet how we appreciate these common things of life when we have lived without them for a while! Many people go up high mountains and risk life and limb for the joy of the climb and the exhilaration that comes from a difficulty surmounted, a danger overcome; and because of the danger that hovers all around them, their perceptions get keener, their joy of the life which hangs by a thread, the more intense.

All of us have our choice of living in the valleys below, with their unhealthy mist and fogs, but giving a measure of bodily security; or of climbing the high

mountains, with risk and danger for companions, to breathe the pure air above, and take joy in the distant views, and welcome the rising sun.

I have given you many quotations and extracts from poet and other in this letter. I shall finish up with one more. It is from the *Gitanjali*; it is a poem, or prayer, by Rabindra Nath Tagore:

> Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
> Where knowledge is free;
> Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
> Where words come out from the depth of truth;
> Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
> Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
> Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action—
> Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

We have finished, *carissima*, and this last letter ends. The last letter! Certainly not. I shall write you many more. But this series ends, and so

Tamām Shud!

4

The Past and the Present[1]

I am but a student, a seeker after knowledge, whose great regret is that the business of politics does not encourage this quest. George III of England once defined politics as a trade for a rascal and not for a gentleman. If that is a correct definition, then indeed I am specially rascally and have wandered far from the ways of gentle folk.

But sometimes the fates are kind and little opportunities occur of dipping into the past and reading of the doings of the giants of old. It is an absorbing study. The more I read of the Aryans of old the more I wonder at their many-sided excellence. Fresh from their cradle in Central Asia they came down to India and swept over western Asia and Europe. They were full of life and the joy of life, and the burden of the world sat lightly upon them. It was indeed the *Satyayuga*, the dawn of history and the long ages of sin and sorrow had yet to come. Warriors they were who rejoiced in battle and yet bowed down to knowledge and virtue. They loved to fight and conquer but the greatest quest for them was the search for knowledge. They loved freedom and honour and preferred death to dishonour of the Aryan name. "Never shall an Arya be subjected to slavery" was their proud charter. And so they marched into India singing songs in praise of the high gods, with faith in themselves and, like the Saracens thousands of years later, in the firm belief that heaven was guiding them in their divine mission.

It is good to think of the past and to gather strength and courage from the example of the great men of old. But it is also dangerous, and in India we are specially liable to this danger. We are prone to think too much of it and to endow the ancients with every virtue under the sun. And instead of any desire to emulate them and to gird up our loins for the purpose, we sink further into apathy and bemoan our miserable lot. We have vague ideas of past splendour and a golden age when the land flowed with milk and honey, and sorrow and suffering hid themselves away from the haunts of men. We do not analyse the springs of past greatness or try to find out what qualities we lack which our ancestors possessed. I think that we can learn a great deal from them; none the

[1] JN Papers, NMML. Presumably written in August 1934. This article does not seem to have been published in Jawaharlal Nehru's lifetime. Excerpts.

less let us remember that the world has not remained stationary during the last few thousand years. The world progresses and advances in knowledge and culture even though there are occasional lapses and retrogression. All history teaches us this lesson of general progress, and indeed life would be a burden difficult to carry if we did not believe that a better order of things is gradually evolving itself in this world of sorrow. To that order our ancient civilization can contribute a great deal, but only if we understand its essentials and live up to them and not lose ourselves in a forest of empty forms and symbols, forgetting the core and the essence.

I shall not venture to enumerate the essentials of that ancient civilization. I am not competent to do that. But I shall touch briefly on some obvious points. It seems to me that the old Aryans were a very 'positive' people. They were active and inquisitive and adaptable. They loved freedom and would suffer no restrictions on their physical or mental liberty. They were not afraid of thinking, of "looking down into the pit of hell", if necessary, and of arriving at novel and disconcerting conclusions. They looked forward in the realms of thought, as well as towards the countries of the earth, for fresh advances and conquests. They had the spirit of adventure in them and life was to them a wonderful game, a quest after the knowledge of this world and the next.

And we, their puny descendants, who pride ourselves in our high ancestry, what are we? A passive, inactive and indolent race forgetful of the idea of freedom or honour. Our guiding principles in life are a number of restrictions. Thou shalt not eat or drink with another, thou shalt not touch such and such, thou shalt not cross the seas and so on and so forth. The one great restriction of old we have forgotten:

"Thou shalt not be subjected to slavery." We have little time to think of it, I suppose, for we are too busy with our cooking and our other ceremonial practices. Like the frog of old we sit in our stagnant pool and imagine that it is the centre of the universe and all knowledge and virtue are in us and there is nothing more to seek or discover. And nature has had its revenge on us. The world has marched on and left us far behind immersed in our superstitions and observances which we do not even understand. Like our old architecture, our faith has lost its ancient purity and simplicity and has been covered up with a mass of abuses and crude symbols and orientation. Today the keepers of our consciences are men, narrow and bigoted and with no knowledge of anything except empty forms and ceremonials. There is nothing more frightful, said Goethe, than a teacher who only knows what the scholars are intended to know. But here the teacher is far more ignorant than the scholar.

We must get rid of this inertia and woodenness and recover some elasticity of thought and movement. We must honour reason more and test everything by the light of that reason, however feeble it may be. There is no room for bigots in the modern world. We must cultivate the spirit of enquiry and welcome all knowledge whether the source of it is the East or the West. Above all, we must

get rid of the gross abuses that have crept into us and threaten to poison our whole system. If we cannot conquer these weaknesses of ours then we sink deeper and deeper into the morass and perish.

But I feel that we can and will survive. A great deal is being said now about the strengthening and purification of Hinduism as practised today. Every person, whether he is a Hindu or not, must welcome any such movement in the interests of a wider culture and human progress. Much more must a Hindu welcome it. Everything that removes the barriers that keep apart one man from another and make a common humanity possible; everything that raises large numbers of human beings and makes life more endurable for them; everything that substitutes reason for ignorant and blind bigotry is ever welcome. We must therefore welcome the movement to broaden the basis of Hinduism and to rid it of its abuses. But I have noted with sorrow that the motive force behind it is not so much the good of Hinduism as the distrust and fear of the Mussulmans. I have come back from the Hindu Sabha meeting in Benares[2] with this conviction strengthened. The motive is almost entirely political. With this, I cannot agree, for it can end in only one thing, and that is disaster for all the communities in India. No great movement of reform ever flourished if it was based on fear and fed on hatred. Logically a movement of this kind can end in only one way. Fear and distrust will multiply and will call out their sister qualities in the other community. Gradually India will be converted into armed camps and every man's hand will be raised against his brother. That can end only in a terrible catastrophe. That is a prospect which cannot be tolerated and which we must avoid at all cost.

This is the reason why I ventured to question the appropriateness of carrying on the *shuddhi* movement on a mass scale. I believe in giving full liberty to every man to adopt the faith of his choice. I also believe that it should be open to anyone, whoever he may be, to join the Hindu fold, should he desire to do so. But the present *shuddhi* movement,[3] so far as I understand it, is based on different reasons and is proceeding on undesirable lines. And instead of peace and harmony it has created hatred and distrust and bitterness. Tolerance has almost ceased to exist and the best of us are not free from ignoble suspicion.

Hinduism has ever prided itself on its toleration. But today it stands in need of a reminder. "All sects deserve reverence for one reason or another," said the great Asoka. "By thus acting a man exalts his own sect, and at the same time does service to the sects of other people. . . . His Majesty cares not for donations or external reverence as that there should be a growth of the essence of the matter in all sects."

There is a common belief among the Hindus that Islam is an intolerant

[2] Jawaharlal Nehru probably had in mind the meeting at Varanasi in November 1933 when he criticized the Mahasabha severely.

[3] On 16 October 1933, the Hindu Mahasabha resolved to take steps to prevent the conversion of Hindus to Christianity.

religion and that it has spread by means of the sword. Most of them would mention the names of Chenghiz Khan and Timur and Mahmud of Ghazni as examples of Muslim tyrants. I wonder how many know that Chenghiz Khan was not even a Mohammedan? Or that Timur was as fond of erecting his favourite pyramids of heads in western Asia where Islam flourished as in India? Or that Mahmud of Ghazni threatened the Khalif at Baghdad with dire penalties? No great religion has prospered by forced conversion and the history of Islam shows that its tremendous initial success was due to its toleration as compared to the intolerance of the Christian sects which flourished then in western Asia and Africa. It may surprise many that one of the main charges actually brought forward in Spain against the Saracens by the Christian King Philip III[4] was their spirit of toleration. Among the "apostacies and treasons" of the Saracens in Spain, wrote the Archbishop of Valencia in 1602, was "that they commended nothing so much as that liberty of conscience, in all matters of religion, which the Turks, and all other Mohammedans, suffer their subjects to enjoy", and on this ground, among others, he recommended that they be expelled from Spain. The recommendation was accepted and vast numbers were brutally expelled.[5] It is most interesting to read of a Spanish *Moulvi*, being driven out of the country more than 300 years ago, speak thus to his tormentors of the Inquisition:

> Did our victorious ancestors ever once attempt to extirpate Christianity out of Spain when it was in their power? Did they not suffer your forefathers to enjoy the free use of their rites at the same time that they wore their chains? If there have been some examples of forced conversions, they are so rare as scarce to deserve mentioning, and only attempted by men who had not the fear of God and the Prophet before their eyes, and who in so doing have acted directly and diametrically contrary to the holy precepts and ordinances of Islam which cannot, without sacrilege, be violated by any who would be held worthy of the honourable epithet of Mussulman. You can never produce, among us, any bloodthirsty, formal tribunal, on account of different persuasions in points of faiths, that anywise approaches your execrable Inquisition. Our arms, it is true, are ever open to receive all who are disposed to embrace our religion; but we are not allowed by our sacred Quran to tyrannise over consciences.

These are the traditions of toleration in Hinduism and Islam. But now, in the twentieth century, when Europe after centuries of slaughter and persecution has established religious toleration, our unhappy country is going backwards

[4] (1578–1621); King of Spain, Naples and Sicily.

[5] On 22 September 1609, it was decreed that, with the exception of six of the oldest and most Christian Moriscos in each village who were to be retained to teach their system of cultivation, every Morisco man and woman was to be expelled.

and forgetting the very lesson it taught to the world in the olden time. Intolerance is always due to want of understanding and ignorance of each other. Let us therefore try to learn each other's history and understand each other's past culture. The future can only hold out its promise to us if we learn to march together. Our chief enemy today is absence of reason, and its necessary consequence—bigotry. Let those therefore who believe in reason, and in freedom for this country and in human progress fight and conquer this enemy wherever and whenever it is found. There will then be few obstacles to unity and progress.

5

Hindu and Muslim Cultures[1]

Hindu and Muslim 'cultures' and the 'Muslim nation'—how these words open out fascinating vistas of past history and present and future speculation! The Muslim nation in India—a nation within a nation, and not even compact, but vague, spread out, indeterminate. Politically, the idea is absurd, economically it is fantastic; it is hardly worth considering. And yet it helps us a little to understand the mentality behind it. Some such separate and unmixable 'nations' existed together in the Middle Ages and afterwards. In the Constantinople of the early days of the Ottoman Sultans each such 'nation' lived separately and had a measure of autonomy—Latin Christians, Orthodox Christians, Jews, etc. This was the beginning of extra-territoriality which, in more recent times, became such a nightmare to many eastern countries. To talk of a 'Muslim nation,' therefore, means that there is no nation at all but a religious bond; it means that no nation in the modern sense must be allowed to grow; it means that modern civilization should be discarded and we should go back to the medieval ways; it means either autocratic government or a foreign government; it means, finally, just nothing at all except an emotional state of mind and a conscious or unconscious desire not to face realities, especially economic realities. Emotions have a way of upsetting logic, and we may not ignore them simply because they seem so unreasonable. But this idea of a Muslim nation is the figment of a few imaginations only, and, but for the publicity given to it by the Press, few people would have heard of it. And even if many people believed in it, it would still vanish at the touch of reality.

So also the ideas of Hindu and Muslim 'culture'. The day of even national cultures is rapidly passing and the world is becoming one cultural unit. Nations may retain, and will retain for a long time much that is peculiar to them—language, habits, ways of thought, etc.—but the machine age and science, with swift travel, constant supply of world news, radio, cinema, etc., will make them more and more uniform. No one can fight against this inevitable tendency, and only a world catastrophe which shatters modern civilization can really check it. There are certainly many differences between the traditional Hindu and Muslim philosophies of life. But these differences are hardly noticeable when both

[1] From *An Autoiography*, pp. 469–72.

of them are compared to the modern scientific and industrial outlook on life, for between this latter and the former two there is a vast gulf. The real struggle today in India is not between Hindu culture and Muslim culture, but between these two and the conquering scientific culture of modern civilization. Those who are desirous of preserving 'Muslim culture', whatever that may be, need not worry about Hindu culture, but should withstand the giant from the West. I have no doubt, personally, that all efforts, Hindu or Muslim, to oppose modern scientific and industrial civilization are doomed to failure, and I shall watch this failure without regret. Our choice was unconsciously and involuntarily made when railways and the like came here. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan made his choice on behalf of the Indian Muslims when he started the Aligarh College. But none of us had really any choice in the matter, except the choice which a drowning man has to clutch at something which might save him.

But what is this 'Muslim culture'? Is it a kind of racial memory of the great deeds of the Arabs, Persians, Turks, etc.? Or language? Or art and music? Or customs? I do not remember anyone referring to present-day Muslim art or Muslim music. The two languages which have influenced Muslim thought in India are Arabic and Persian, and especially the latter. But the influence of Persian has no element of religion about it. The Persian language and many Persian customs and traditions came to India in the course of thousands of years and impressed themselves powerfully all over north India. Persia was the France of the East, sending its language and culture to all its neighbours. That is a common and a precious heritage for all of us in India.

Pride in the past achievements of Islamic races and countries is probably one of the strongest of Islamic bonds. Does anyone grudge the Muslims this noble record of various races? No one can take it away from them so long as they choose to remember it and cherish it. As a matter of fact, this past record is also to a large extent a common heritage for all of us, perhaps because we feel as Asiatics a common bond uniting us against the aggression of Europe. I know that whenever I have read of the conflicts of the Arabs in Spain or during the Crusades, my sympathies have always been with them. I try to be impartial and objective, but, try as I will, the Asiatic in me influences my judgement when an Asiatic people are concerned.

I have tried hard to understand what this 'Muslim culture' is, but I confess that I have not succeeded. I find a tiny handful of middle-class Muslims as well as Hindus in north India influenced by the Persian language and traditions. And looking to the masses the most obvious symbols of 'Muslim culture' seem to be: a particular type of pyjamas, not too long and not too short, a particular way of shaving or clipping the moustache but allowing the beard to grow, and a *lota* with a special kind of snout, just as the corresponding Hindu customs are the wearing of a dhoti, the possession of a topknot, and a *lota* of a different kind. As a matter of fact, even these distinctions are largely urban and they tend to

disappear. The Muslim peasantry and industrial workers are hardly distinguishable from the Hindu. The Muslim intelligentsia seldom sports a beard, though Aligarh still fancies a red Turkish cap with a fez (Turkish it is called, although Turkey will have none of it). Muslim women have taken to the *sari* and are emerging rather slowly from the purdah. My own tastes do not harmonize with some of those habits, and I do not fancy beards or moustaches or topknot, but I have no desire to impose my canons of taste on others, though I must confess, in regard to beards, that I rejoiced when Amanullah began to deal with them in a summary fashion in Kabul.

I must say that those Hindus and Muslims who are always looking backward, always clutching at things which are slipping away from their grasp, are a singularly pathetic sight. I do not wish to damn the past or to reject it, for there is so much that is singularly beautiful in our past. That will endure I have no doubt. But it is not the beautiful that these people clutch at, but something that is seldom worthwhile and is often harmful.

In recent years Indian Muslims have had repeated shocks, and many of their deeply cherished notions have been shattered. Turkey, that champion of Islam, has not only ended the Khilafat, for which India put up such a brave fight in 1920, but has taken step after step away from religion. In the new Turkish Constitution an article stated that Turkey was a Moslem State, but, lest there be any mistake, Kemal Pasha said in 1927: "The provision in the Constitution that Turkey is a Moslem State is a compromise destined to be done away with at the first opportunity." And I believe he acted up to this hint later on. Egypt, though much more cautiously, is going the same way and keeping her politics quite apart from religion. So also the Arab countries, except Arabia itself, which is more backward. Persia is looking back to pre-Islamic days for her cultural inspiration. Everywhere religion recedes into the background and nationalism appears in aggressive garbs, and behind nationalism other isms which talk in social and economic terms. What of the 'Muslim nation' and 'Muslim culture'? Are they to be found in the future only in northern India, rejoicing under the benign rule of the British?

If progress consists in the individual taking a broader view of what constitutes politics, our communalists as well as our Government have deliberately and consistently aimed at the opposite of this—the narrowing of this view.

6

History and Tradition[1]

Indian mythology is not confined to the epics; it goes back to the Vedic period and appears in many forms and garbs in Sanskrit literature. The poets and the dramatists take full advantage of it and build their stories and lovely fancies round it. The Ashoka tree is said to burst into flower when touched by the foot of a beautiful woman. We read of the adventures of Kāma, the god of love, and his wife, Rati (or rapture), with their friend Vasanta, the god of spring. Greatly daring, Kāma shoots his flowery arrow at Shiva himself and is reduced to ashes by the fire that flashed out of Shiva's third eye. But he survives as Ananga, the bodiless one.

Most of the myths and stories are heroic in conception and teach adherence to truth and the pledged word, whatever the consequences, faithfulness up to death and even beyond, courage, good works and sacrifice for the common good. Sometimes the story is pure myth, or else it is a mixture of fact and myth, an exaggerated account of some incident that tradition preserved. Facts and fiction are so interwoven together as to be inseparable, and this amalgam becomes an imagined history, which may not tell us exactly what happened but does tell us something that is equally important—what people believed had taken place, what they thought their heroic ancestors were capable of, and what ideals inspired them. So, whether fact or fiction, it became a living element in their lives, ever pulling them up from the drudgery and ugliness of their every-day existence to higher realms, ever pointing towards the path of endeavour and right living, even though the ideal might be far off and difficult to reach.

Goethe is reported to have condemned those who said that the old Roman stories of heroism, of Lucretia and others, were spurious and false. Anything, he said, that was essentially false and spurious could only be absurd and un-fruitful and never beautiful and inspiring, and that "if the Romans were great enough to invent things like that, we at least should be great enough to believe them."

Thus this imagined history, mixture of fact and fiction, or sometimes only fiction, becomes symbolically true and tells us of the minds and hearts and purposes of the people of that particular epoch. It is true also in the sense that

[1] From *The Discovery of India*, pp. 101–4.

it becomes the basis for thought and action, for future history. The whole conception of history in ancient India was influenced by the speculative and ethical trends of philosophy and religion. Little importance was attached to the writing of a chronicle or the compilation of a bare record of events. What those people were more concerned with was the effect and influence of human events and actions on human conduct. Like the Greeks, they were strongly imaginative and artistic and they gave rein to this artistry and imagination in dealing with past events, intent as they were on drawing some moral and lesson from them for future behaviour.

Unlike the Greeks, and unlike the Chinese and the Arabs, Indians in the past were not historians. This was very unfortunate and it has made it difficult for us now to fix dates or make up an accurate chronology. Events run into each other, overlap and produce an enormous confusion. Only very gradually are patient scholars today discovering the clues to the maze of Indian history. There is really only one old book, Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, a history of Kashmir written in the twelfth century AD, which may be considered as history. For the rest we have to go to the imagined history of the epics and other books, to some contemporary records, to inscriptions, to artistic and architectural remains, to coins, and to the large body of Sanskrit literature, for occasional hints; also, of course, to the many records of foreign travellers who came to India, notably Greeks and Chinese, and, during a later period, Arabs.

This lack of historical sense did not affect the masses, for as elsewhere and more so than elsewhere, they built up their view of the past from the traditional accounts and myth and story that were handed to them from generation to generation. This imagined history and mixture of fact and legend became widely known and gave to the people a strong and abiding cultural background. But the ignoring of history had evil consequences which we pursue still. It produced a vagueness of outlook, a divorce from life as it is, a credulity, a woolliness of the mind where fact was concerned. That mind was not at all woolly in the far more difficult, but inevitably vaguer and more indefinite, realms of philosophy; it was both analytic and synthetic, often very optical, sometimes sceptical. But where fact was concerned, it was uncritical, because, perhaps, it did not attach much importance to fact as such.

The impact of science and the modern world have brought a greater appreciation of facts, a more critical faculty, a weighing of evidence, a refusal to accept tradition merely because it is tradition. Many competent historians are at work now, but they often err on the other side and their work is more a meticulous chronicle of facts than living history. But even today it is strange how we suddenly become overwhelmed by tradition, and the critical faculties of even intelligent men cease to function. This may partly be due to the nationalism that consumes us in our present subject state. Only when we are politically and economically free will the mind function normally and critically. . . .

It is not Indians only who are affected by nationalist urges and supposed national interest in the writing or consideration of history. Every nation and people seem to be affected by this desire to gild and better the past and distort it to their advantage. The histories of India that most of us have had to read, chiefly written by Englishmen, are usually long apologies for and panegyrics of British rule, and a barely veiled contemptuous account of what happened here in the millenniums preceding it. Indeed, real history for them begins with the advent of the Englishman into India; all that went before is in some mystic kind of way a preparation for this divine consummation. Even the British period is distorted with the object of glorifying British rule and British virtues. Very slowly a more correct perspective is developing. But we need not go to the past to find instances of the manipulation of history to suit particular ends and support one's own fancies and prejudices. The present is full of this, and if the present, which we have ourselves seen and experienced, can be so distorted, what of the past?

Nevertheless, it is true that Indians are peculiarly liable to accept tradition and report it as history, uncritically and without sufficient examination. They will have to rid themselves of this loose thinking and easy way of arriving at conclusions.

7

Materialism[1]

One of our major misfortunes is that we have lost so much of the world's ancient literature—in Greece, in India, and elsewhere. Probably this was inevitable as these books were originally written on palm-leaves or on *bhurjapatra*, the thin layers of the bark of the birch tree which peel off so easily, and later on paper. There were only a few copies of a work in existence and if they were lost or destroyed, that work disappeared, and it can only be traced by references to it, or quotations from it, in other books. Even so, about fifty or sixty thousand manuscripts in Sanskrit or its variations have already been traced and listed and fresh discoveries are being constantly made. Many old Indians books have so far not been found in India at all but their translations in Chinese or Tibetan have been discovered. Probably an organized search for old manuscripts in the libraries of religious institutions, monasteries, and private persons would yield rich results. That, and the critical examination of these manuscripts and, where considered desirable, their publication and translation, are among the many things we have to do in India when we succeed in breaking through our shackles and can function for ourselves. Such study is bound to throw light on many phases of Indian history and especially on the social background behind historic events and changing ideas. The fact that in spite of repeated losses and destruction, and without any organized attempt to discover them, over fifty thousand manuscripts have been brought out, shows how extraordinarily abundant must have been the literary, dramatic, philosophical and other productions of old times. Many of the manuscripts discovered still await thorough examination.

Among the books that have been lost is the entire literature on materialism which followed the period of the early *Upanishads*. The only references to this, now found, are in criticisms of it and in elaborate attempts to disprove the materialist theories. There can be no doubt, however, that the materialist philosophy was professed in India for centuries and had, at the time, a powerful influence on the people. In the famous *Arthashāstra,* Kautilya's book on political and economic organization, written in the fourth century BC, it is mentioned as one of the major philosophies of India.

[1] From *The Discovery of India*, pp. 96–9.

We have then to rely on the critics and persons interested in disparaging this philosophy, and they try to pour ridicule on it and show how absurd it all is. That is an unfortunate way for us to find out what it was. Yet their very eagerness to discredit it shows how important it was in their eyes. Possibly much of the literature of materialism in India was destroyed by the priests and other believers in the orthodox religion during subsequent periods.

The materialists attacked authority and all vested interests in thought, religion and theology. They denounced the Vedas and priestcraft and traditional beliefs, and proclaimed that belief must be free and must not depend on presuppositions or merely on the authority of the past. They inveighed against all forms of magic and superstition. Their general spirit was comparable in many ways to the modern materialistic approach; it wanted to rid itself of the chains and burden of the past, of speculation about matters which could not be perceived, of worship of imaginary gods. Only that could be presumed to exist which could be directly perceived, every other inference or presumption was equally likely to be true or false. Hence matter in its various forms and this world could only be considered as really existing. There was no other world, no heaven or hell, no soul separate from the body. Mind and intelligence and everything else have developed from the basic elements. Natural phenomena did not concern themselves with human values and were indifferent to what we consider good or bad. Moral rules were mere conventions made by men.

We recognize all this; it seems curiously of our day and not of more than two thousand years ago. How did these thoughts arise, these doubts and conflicts, this rebellion of the mind of man against traditional authority? We do not know enough of social and political conditions then, but it seems clear that it was an age of political conflict and social turmoil, leading to a disintegration of faith and to keen intellectual inquiry and a search for some way out, satisfying to the mind. It was out of this mental turmoil and social maladjustment that new paths grew and new systems of philosophy took shape. Systematic philosophy, not the instuitional approach of the *Upanishads*, but based on close reasoning and argument, begins to appear in many garbs, Jain, Buddhist, and what might be called Hindu, for want of a better word. The epics also belong to this period and the *Bhagavad Gita*. It is difficult to build up an accurate chronology of this age, as thought and theory overlapped and acted and reacted on each other. Buddha came in the sixth century BC. Some of these developments preceded him, others followed, or often there was a parallel growth.

About the time of the rise of Buddhism, the Persian Empire reached the Indus. This approach of a great power right to the borders of India proper must have influenced people's thoughts. In the fourth century BC, Alexander's brief raid into north-west India took place. It was unimportant in itself, but it was the precursor of far-reaching changes in India. Almost immediately after Alexander's death, Chandragupta built up the great Maurya Empire. That was,

historically speaking, the first strong, widespread and centralized state in India. Tradition mentions many such rulers and overlords of India and one of the epics deals with the struggle for the suzerainty of India, meaning thereby probably northern India. But, in all probability, ancient India, like ancient Greece, was a collection of small states. There were many tribal republics, some of them covering large areas; there were also petty kingdoms; and there were, as in Greece, city states with powerful guilds of merchants. In Buddha's time there were a number of these tribal republics and four principal kingdoms in central and northern India (including Gandhara or part of Afghanistan). Whatever the form of organization, the tradition of city or village autonomy was very strong, and even when an overlordship was acknowledged there was no interference with the internal working of the state. There was a kind of primitive democracy, though, as in Greece, it was probably confined to the upper classes.

Ancient India and Greece, so different in many ways, have so much in common that I am led to believe that their background of life was very similar. The Poloponnesian war, ending in the breakdown of Athenian democracy might in some ways be compared to the Mahabharata war,* the great war of ancient India. The failure of Hellenism and of the free city state led to a feeling of doubt and despair, to a pursuit of mysteries and revelations, a lowering of the earlier ideals of the race. The emphasis shifted from this world to the next. Later, new schools of philosophy—the Stoic and the Epicurean—developed.

It is dangerous and misleading to make historical comparisons on slender, and sometimes contradictory, data. Yet one is tempted to do so. The period in India after the Mahabharata war, with its seemingly chaotic mental atmosphere, reminds one of the post-Hellenic period of Greece. There was a vulgarization of ideals and then a groping for new philosophies. Politically and economically similar internal changes might have been taking place, such as the weakening of the tribal republic and city state and the tendency to centralize state power.

But this comparison does not take us very far. Greece never really recovered from these shocks, although Greek civilization flourished for some additional centuries in the Mediterranean and influenced Rome and Europe. In India there was a remarkable recovery and the thousand years from the Epic Period and the Buddha onwards were full of creative energy. Innumerable great names in philosophy, literature, drama, mathematics, and the arts stand out. In the early centuries of the Christian era a remarkable burst of energy resulted in the organization of colonial enterprises which took the Indian people and their culture to distant islands in the eastern seas.

*The epic dealing with this war is also called *Mahabharata.*

8

An Integrated Vision of Life[1]

India must break with much of her past and not allow it to dominate the present. Our lives are encumbered with the dead wood of the past; all that is dead and has served its purpose has to go. But that does not mean a break with, or a forgetting of, the vital and life-giving in that past. We can never forget the ideals that have moved our race, the dreams of the Indian people through the ages, the wisdom of the ancients, the buoyant energy and love of life and nature of our forefathers, their spirit of curiosity and mental adventure, the daring of their thought, their splendid achievements in literature, art and culture, their love of truth and beauty and freedom, the basic values that they set up, their understanding of life's mysterious ways, their toleration of other ways than theirs, their capacity to absorb other peoples and their cultural accomplishments, to synthesize them and develop a varied and mixed culture; nor can we forget the myriad experiences which have built up our ancient race and lie embedded in our subconscious minds. We will never forget them or cease to take pride in that noble heritage of ours. If India forgets them she will no longer remain India and much that has made her our joy and pride will cease to be.

It is not this that we have to break with, but all the dust and dirt of ages that have covered her up and hidden her inner beauty and significance, the excrescences and abortions that have twisted and petrified her spirit, set it in rigid frames, and stunted her growth. We have to cut away these excrescences and remember afresh the core of that ancient wisdom and adapt it to our present circumstances. We have to get out of traditional ways of thought and living which, for all the good they may have done in a past age, and there was much good in them, have ceased to have significance today. We have to make our own all the achievements of the human race and join up with others in the exciting adventure of man, more exciting today perhaps than in earlier ages, realizing that this has ceased to be governed by national boundaries or old divisions and is common to the race of man everywhere. We have to revive the passion for truth and beauty and freedom which gives meaning to life, and develop afresh that dynamic outlook and spirit of adventure which distinguished those of our race who, in ages past, built our house on these strong and enduring foundations.

[1] From *The Discovery of India*, pp. 509–14.

Old as we are, with memories stretching back to the early dawns of human history and endeavour, we have to grow young again, in tune with our present time, with the irrepressible spirit and joy of youth in the present and its faith in the future.

Truth as ultimate reality, if such there is, must be eternal, imperishable, unchanging. But that infinite, eternal and unchanging truth cannot be apprehended in its fullness by the finite mind of man which can only grasp, at most, some small aspect of it limited by time and space, and by the state of development of that mind and the prevailing ideology of the period. As the mind develops and enlarges its scope, as ideologies change and new symbols are used to express that truth, new aspects of it come to light, though the core of it may yet be the same. And so, truth has ever to be sought and renewed, reshaped, and developed, so that, as understood by man, it might keep in line with the growth of his thought and the development of human life. Only then does it become a living truth for humanity, supplying the essential need for which it craves, and offering guidance in the present and for the future.

But if some one aspect of the truth has been petrified by dogma in a past age, it ceases to grow and develop and adapt itself to the changing needs of humanity; other aspects of it remain hidden and it fails to answer the urgent questions of a succeeding age. It is no longer dynamic but static, no longer a life-giving impulse but dead thought and ceremonial and a hindrance to the growth of the mind and of humanity. Indeed, it is probably not even understood to the extent it was understood in that past age when it grew up and was clothed in the language and symbols of that age. For its context is different in a later age, the mental climate has changed, new social habits and customs have grown up, and it is often difficult to understand the sense, much less the spirit, of that ancient writing. Moreover, as Aurobindo Ghose has pointed out, every truth, however true in itself, yet taken apart from others which at once limit and complete it, becomes a snare to bind the intellect and a misleading dogma; for in reality each is one thread of a complex weft and no thread must be taken apart from the weft.

Religions have helped greatly in the development of humanity. They have laid down values and standards and have pointed out principles for the guidance of human life. But with all the good they have done, they have also tried to imprison truth in set forms and dogmas, and encouraged ceremonials and practices which soon lose all their original meaning and become mere routine. While impressing upon man the awe and mystery of the unknown that surrounds him on all sides, they have discouraged him from trying to understand not only the unknown but what might come in the way of social effort. Instead of encouraging curiosity and thought, they have preached a philosophy of submission to nature, to established churches, to the prevailing social order, and to everything that is. The belief in a supernatural agency which ordains

everything has led to a certain irresponsibility on the social plane, and emotion and sentimentality have taken the place of reasoned thought and inquiry. Religion, though it has undoubtedly brought comfort to innumerable human beings and stabilized society by its values, has checked the tendency to change and progress inherent in human society.

Philosophy has avoided many of these pitfalls and encouraged thought and inquiry. But it has usually lived in its ivory tower cut off from life and its day-to-day problems, concentrating on ultimate purpose and failing to link them with the life of man. Logic and reason were its guides and they took it far in many directions, but that logic was too much the product of the mind and unconcerned with fact.

Science ignored the ultimate purposes and looked at fact alone. It made the world jump forward a leap, built up a glittering civilization, opened up innumerable avenues for the growth of knowledge, and added to the power of man to such an extent that for the first time it was possible to conceive that man could triumph over and shape his physical environment. Man became almost a geological force, changing the face of the planet earth chemically, physically, and in many other ways. Yet when this sorry scheme of things entirely seemed to be in his grasp, to mould it nearer to the heart's desire, there was some essential lack and some vital element was missing. There was no knowledge of ultimate purposes and not even an understanding of the immediate purpose, for science had told us nothing about any purpose in life. Nor did man, so powerful in his control of nature, have the power to control himself, and the monster he had created ran amok. Perhaps new developments in biology, psychology, and similar sciences, and the interpretation of biology and physics, may help man to understand and control himself more than he has done in the past. Or, before any such advances influence human life sufficiently, man may destroy the civilization he has built and have to start anew.

There is no visible limit to the advance of science, if it is given the chance to advance. Yet it may be that the scientific method of observation is not always applicable to all the varieties of human experience and cannot cross the uncharted ocean that surrounds us. With the help of philosophy it may go a little further and venture even on these high seas. And when both science and philosophy fail us, we shall have to rely on such other powers of apprehension as we may possess. For there appears to be a definite stopping place beyond which reason, as the mind is at present constituted, cannot go. "La derniere démarche de la raison," says Pascal, "c'est de connaitre qu'il y a une infinite de choses qui la surpassent. Elle est bien faible si elle ne va jusque-la."

Realizing these limitations of reason and scientific method, we have still to hold on to them with all our strength, for without that firm basis and background we can have no grip on any kind of truth or reality. It is better to understand a part of truth and apply it to our lives, than to understand nothing at all

and flounder helplessly in a vain attempt to pierce the mystery of existence. The applications of science are inevitable and unavoidable for all countries and peoples today. But something more than its application is necessary. It is the scientific approach, the adventurous and yet critical temper of science, the search for truth and new knowledge, the refusal to accept anything without testing and trial, the capacity to change previous conclusion in the face of new evidence, the reliance on observed fact and not on pre-conceived theory, the hard discipline of the mind—all this is necessary, not merely for the application of science but for life itself and the solution of its many problems. Too many scientists today, who swear by science, forget all about it outside their particular spheres. The scientific approach and temper are, or should be, a way of life, a process of thinking, a method of acting and associating with our fellowmen. That is a large order and undoubtedly very few of us, if any at all, can function in this way with even partial success. But this criticism applies in equal or even greater measure to all the injunctions which philosophy and religion have laid upon us. The scientific temper points out the way along which man should travel. It is the temper of a free man. We live in a scientific age, so we are told, but there is little evidence of this temper in the people anywhere or even in their leaders.

Science deals with the domain of positive knowledge but the temper which it should produce goes beyond that domain. The ultimate purposes of man may be said to be to gain knowledge, to realize truth, to appreciate goodness and beauty. The scientific method of objective inquiry is not applicable to all these, and much that is vital in life seems to lie beyond its scope—the sensitiveness to art and poetry, the emotion that beauty produces, the inner recognition of goodness. The botanist and zoologist may never experience the charm and beauty of nature; the sociologist may be wholly lacking in love for humanity. But even when we go to the regions beyond the reach of the scientific method and visit the mountain tops where philosophy dwells and high emotions fill us, or gaze at the immensity beyond, that approach and temper are still necessary.

Very different is the method of religion. Concerned as it is principally with the regions beyond the reach of objective inquiry, it relies on emotion and intuition. And then it applies this method to everything in life, even to those things which are capable of intellectual inquiry and observation. Organized religion, allying itself to theology and often more concerned with its vested interests than with things of the spirit, encourages a temper which is the very opposite to that of science. It produces narrowness and intolerance, credulity and superstition, emotionalism and irrationalism. It tends to close and limit the mind of man, and to produce a temper of a dependent, unfree person.

Even if God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent Him, so Voltaire said—"si Dieu n'existait pas, il faudrait l'inventer." Perhaps that is true, and indeed the mind of man has always been trying to fashion some such mental

image or conception which grew with the mind's growth. But there is something also in the reverse proposition: even if God exists, it may be desirable not to look up to Him or to rely upon Him. Too much dependence on supernatural factors may lead, and has often led, to a loss of self-reliance in man and to a blunting of his capacity and creative ability. And yet some faith seems necessary in things of the spirit which are beyond the scope of our physical world, some reliance on moral, spiritual, and idealistic conceptions, or else we have no anchorage, no objectives or purpose in life. Whether we believe in God or not, it is impossible not to believe in something, whether we call it a creative life-giving force or vital energy inherent in matter which gives it its capacity for self-movement and change and growth, or by some other name, something that is as real, though elusive, as life is real when contrasted with death. Whether we are conscious of it or not most of us worship at the invisible altar of some unknown god and offer sacrifices to it—some ideal, personal, national or international; some distant objective that draws us on, though reason itself may find little substance in it; some vague conception of a perfect man and a better world. Perfection may be impossible of attainment, but the demon in us, some vital force, urges us on and we tread that path from generation to generation.

As knowledge advances, the domain of religion, in the narrow sense of the word, shrinks. The more we understand life and nature, the less we look for supernatural causes. Whatever we can understand and control ceases to be a mystery. The processes of agriculture, the food we eat, the clothes we wear, our social relations, were all at one time under the dominion of religion and its high priests. Gradually they have passed out of its control and become subjects for scientific study. Yet much of this is still powerfully affected by religious beliefs and the superstitions that accompany them. The final mysteries still remain far beyond the reach of the human mind and are likely to continue to remain so. But so many of life's mysteries are capable of and await solution, that an obsession with the final mystery seems hardly necessary or justified. Life still offers not only the loveliness of the world but also the exciting adventure of fresh and never-ceasing discoveries, of new panoramas opening out and new ways of living, adding to its fullness and ever making it richer and more complete.

It is therefore with the temper and approach of science, allied to philosophy, and with reverence for all that lies beyond, that we must face life. Thus we may develop an integral vision of life which embraces in its wide scope the past and the present, with all their heights and depths, and look with serenity towards the future. The depths are there and cannot be ignored, and always by the side of the loveliness that surrounds us is the misery of the world. Man's journey through life is an odd mixture of joy and sorrow; thus only can he learn and advance. The travail of the soul is a tragic and lonely business. External events and their consequences affect us powerfully, and yet the greatest shocks come to our minds through inner fears and conflicts. While we advance on the external

plane, as we must if we are to survive, we have also to win peace with ourselves and between ourselves and our environment, a peace which brings satisfaction not only to our physical and material needs but also to those inner imaginative urges and adventurous spirits that have distinguished man ever since he started on his troubled journey in the realms of thought and action. Whether that journey has any ultimate purpose or not we do not know, but it has its compensations, and it points to many a nearer objective which appears attainable and which may again become the starting point for a fresh advance.

9

Out of Tune with the Elements[1]

It would seem that the kind of modern civilization that developed first in the West and spread elsewhere, and especially the metropolitan life that has been its chief feature, produces an unstable society which gradually loses its vitality. Life advances in many fields and yet it loses its grip; it becomes more artificial and slowly ebbs away. More and more stimulants are needed—drugs to enable us to sleep or to perform our other natural functions, foods and drinks that tickle the palate and produce a momentary exhilaration at the cost of weakening the system, and special devices to give us a temporary sensation of pleasure and excitement—and after the stimulation comes the reaction and a sense of emptiness. With all its splendid manifestations and real achievements, we have created a civilization which has something counterfeit about it. We eat ersatz foods produced with the help of ersatz fertilizers; we indulge in ersatz emotions and our human relations seldom go below the superficial plane. The advertiser is one of the symbols of our age with his continuous and raucous attempts to delude us and dull our powers of perception and induce us to buy unnecessary and even harmful products. I am not blaming others for this state of affairs. We are all products of this age with the characteristics of our generation, equally entitled to credit or blame. Certainly I am as much a part of this civilization, that I both appreciate and criticize, as anyone else and my habits and ways of thought are conditioned by it.

What is wrong with modern civilization which produces at the roots these signs of sterility and racial decadence? But this is nothing new, it has happened before and history is full of examples of it. Imperial Rome in its decline was far worse. Is there a cycle governing this inner decay and can we seek out the causes and eliminate them? Modern industrialism and the capitalist structure of society cannot be the sole causes, for decadence has often occurred without them. It is probable, however, that in their present forms they do create an environment, a physical and mental climate, which is favourable for the functioning of those causes. If the basic cause is something spiritual, something affecting the mind and spirit of man, it is difficult to grasp though we may try to understand

[1] From *The Discovery of India*, pp. 554–7.

it or intuitively feel it. But one fact seems to stand out: that a divorce from the soil, from the good earth, is bad for the individual and the race.

The earth and the sun are the sources of life and if we keep away from them for long life begins to ebb away. Modern industrialized communities have lost touch with the soil and do not experience that joy which nature gives and the rich glow of health which comes from contact with mother earth. They talk of nature's beauty and go to seek it in occasional week-ends, littering the countryside with the product of their own artificial lives, but they cannot commune with nature or feel part of it. It is something to look at and admire, because they are told to do so, and then return with a sigh of relief to their normal haunts; just as they might try to admire some classic poet or writer and then, wearied by the attempt, return to their favourite novel or detective story, where no effort of mind is necessary. They are not children of nature, like the old Greeks or Indians, but strangers paying an embarrassing call on a scarce-known distant relative. And so they do not experience that joy in nature's rich life and infinite variety and that feeling of being intensely alive which came so naturally to our forefathers. Is it surprising then that nature treats them as unwanted step-children?

We cannot go back to that old pantheistic outlook and yet perhaps we may still sense the mystery of nature, listen to its song of life and beauty, and draw vitality from it. That song is not sung in the chosen spots only, and we can hear it, if we have the ears for it, almost everywhere. But there are some places where it charms even those who are unprepared for it and comes like the deep notes of a distant and powerful organ. Among these favoured spots is Kashmir where loveliness dwells and an enchantment steals over the senses. Writing about Kashmir, M. Foucher, the French savant, says: 'May I go further and say what I believe to be the true reason for this special charm of Kashmir, the charm which everybody seeks, even those who do not try to analyse it? It cannot be only because of its magnificent woods, the pure limpidity of its lakes, the splendour of its snowy mountain tops, or the happy murmur of its myriad brooks sounding in the cool soft air. Nor can it be only the grace or majesty of its ancient buildings, though the ruins of Martand rise at the prow of their Karewa as proudly as a Greek temple on a promontory, and the little shrine of Payar, carved out of ten stones, has the perfect proportions of the choragic monuments of Lysicrates. One cannot even say that it comes of the combination of art and landscape, for fine buildings in a romantic setting are to be found in many other countries. But what is found in Kashmir alone is the grouping of these two kinds of beauty in the midst of a nature still animated with a mysterious life, which knows how to whisper close to our ears and make the pagan depths of us quiver, which leads us back, consciously or unconsciously, to those past days lamented by the poet, when the world was young, when

le ciel sur la terre
*Marchait et repirait dans un peuple de dieux.**

But my purpose is not to praise Kashmir, though my partiality for it occasionally leads me astray, nor to advance an argument in favour of pantheism, though I am pagan enough to believe that a touch of paganism is good for the mind and body. I do think that life cut off completely from the soil will ultimately wither away. Of course there is seldom such a complete cutting off and the processes of nature take their time. But it is a weakness of modern civilization that it is progressively going further away from the life-giving elements. The competitive and acquisitive characteristics of modern capitalist society, the enthronement of wealth above everything else, the continuous strain and the lack of security for many, add to the ill-health of the mind and produce neurotic states. A saner and more balanced economic structure would lead to an improvement of these conditions. Even so it will be necessary to have greater and more living contacts with the land and nature. This does not mean a return to the land in the old and limited sense of the word, or to a going back to primitive ways of life. That remedy might well be worse than the disease. It should be possible to organize modern industry in such a way as to keep men and women, as far as possible, in touch with the land, and to raise the cultural level of the rural areas. The village and the city should approach each other in regard to life's amenities, so that in both there should be full opportunities for bodily and mental development and a full all-rounded life.

That this can be done I have little doubt, provided only that people want to do it. At present there is no such widespread desire and our energies are diverted (apart from killing each other) in producing ersatz products and ersatz amusements. I have no basic objection to most of these, and some I think are definitely desirable, but they absorb the time that might often be better employed and give a wrong perspective to life. Artificial fertilizers are in great demand today and I suppose they do good in their own way. But it does seem odd to me that in their enthusiasm for the artificial product, people should forget natural manure and even waste it and throw it away. Only China, as a nation, has had the good sense to make full use of the natural stuff. Some experts say that artificial fertilizers, though producing quick results, weaken the soil by depriving it of some essential ingredients, and thus the land grows progressively more sterile. With the earth, as with our individual lives, there is far too much of burning the candle at both ends. We take her riches from her at a prodigious pace and give little or nothing back.

We are proud of our increasing ability to produce almost anything in the chemical laboratory. From the age of steam, we proceeded to that of electricity

*'*L'art greco-bouddhique du Gandharva.*'

and now we are in an age of biotechnics and electronics. The age of social science, which we hope will solve many of the intimate problems that trouble us so much, looms ahead. We are also told that we are on the threshold of the magnesium-aluminium age and as both these metals are extremely abundant and universally distributed, there can be no lack for anyone. The new chemistry is building a new life for mankind. We seem to be on the verge of increasing enormously the power resources of humanity and all manner of epoch-making discoveries hover over the near future.

All this is very comforting and yet a doubt creeps into my mind. It is not lack of power that we suffer from but a misuse of the power we possess or not a proper application of it. Science gives power but remains impersonal, purposeless, and almost unconcerned with our application of the knowledge it puts at our disposal. It may continue its triumphs and yet, if it ignores nature too much, nature may play a subtle revenge upon it. While life seems to grow in outward stature, it may ebb away inside for lack of something yet undiscovered by science.

10

March of Humanity[1]

Now, I do not know what many of you feel when you think about a historical subject. For my part I feel tremendously fascinated by and interested in the subject of history and my mind begins to wander a little trying to think of this long sweep and trying to draw not only interest, but inspiration or knowledge or understanding or all of them. I do not know if one always succeeds in getting that inspiration from it as a whole; one does sometimes find other aspects of it which are far from inspiring. In any event, one has to go back to it to understand the present and to try to understand what the future ought to be. They say that history never repeats itself. I suppose that is true. Nevertheless, to understand anything you have to go back to the roots of the forces and the various other happenings that are taking place today and they are the only possible data which you can have; otherwise you have to trust your imagination only.

History, as a famous writer has described it, is a record of the martyrdom of man. Perhaps so. It is also a record of repeated resurrections after every crucifixion. So you see this process of martyrdom and crucifixion of man, and resurrection following it, in interminable succession. You may consider history as the onward march of humanity, of the human spirit, and yet sometimes we are pulled back by seeing how that onward march is suddenly arrested and thrown back.

Now, every age, I suppose, thinks that it is an age of transition. Nevertheless, I suppose there is an element of truth in our thinking that the present age we live in is peculiarly an age of transition and change: at any rate the problem we have to face appear to be far bigger and acuter than any other problems, partly because of the extent of the problems and because every problem now becomes a world problem. It is quite impossible today to think of current events or of history in the making in terms of any one nation or country or patch of territory; you have inevitably to think in terms of the world as a whole. You may, of course, and you should, think of each of the smaller aspects of that larger picture; you may examine them more closely. But the whole conception of the history of a country being the names of a large number of kings and emperors,

[1] Address to the Indian Historical Records Commission, New Delhi, 23 December 1948. JN Papers, NMML. Excerpts.

and our learning them by heart, I suppose, is long dead. I am not quite sure whether in the schools and colleges of India it has ceased to exist or not, but I hope at any rate that it is dead, because anything more futile than children's study of the record of kings' reigns and battles I cannot imagine.

The other aspect of history which has come much more to the forefront—the social aspect of history, the development of the social organism—involves much closer research into the daily lives of the common man. Maybe in family budgets a hundred or a thousand years ago, there were a hundred and a thousand and one things which make us realize something of what the life of humanity was in the past age. It is only then that we can really clothe the dry bones of history with life, flesh and blood. I must confess that even now, in spite of this acknowledged new approach, most of the books on history and papers on history that appear, interesting though the subject matter may be, appear to me to be quite singularly lifeless and dead. They are just the dry bones; there is no flesh and blood in them. And I suppose the only way really to read, write or understand history is to evoke in the mind a picture of a living society functioning, thinking and having all the virtues and failings which the human being has possessed, and gradually changing, whether in the direction of progress or in some other.

11

Cultural and Moral Values[1]

I am interested to learn that it is proposed to hold a conference on culture, religion, and morals[2] in their relation to social problems. The subject is a fascinating one and undoubtedly has a very great bearing on the problems of today. I cannot speak about religions because that word has so many meanings in different minds and the kind of religion we see about us in every country is more of a husk and a ritual than anything having a real content. Because of this present-day aspect of religion, I have not felt attracted to it, though I have little doubt that in its wider and deeper conception, it can be something of great value to life. But that conception is so far removed from what religion is thought to be today by most persons that to use the word may very well produce a wrong impression in many people's minds.

I am convinced, however, that a consideration of cultural and moral values and standards is essential if we have to solve the problems that afflict the world today. The most noticeable feature of this world of today, including India, is the divorce between the moral and cultural standards and the business of life. Cultural values progressively lose their significance and fade away, and vulgarity, petty-mindedness, and an absence of any conception of obligation and duties become more and more evident.

We live in a rapidly changing age, when it has become essential to replace our old political and economic structures. Unfortunately we have mixed up even the moral and cultural values with these disintegrating social structures. And so the latter also tend to be ignored and forgotten. To some extent there has to be some substitution of social values when the old structure gives place to new, and new institutions replace the old. Moral standards may take new form and shape. Nevertheless, there must be something permanent in the essential cultural and moral values which does not or should not change. If that changes, then the social structure may lose anchorage completely.

Mahatma Gandhi laid constant emphasis on this vital aspect of human existence. He called it truth and nonviolence, and for him even God was yet

[1] Message to the conference on culture, religion, and morals, New Delhi, 29 January 1949. PMS file, Speeches and Writings, August 1947–49. Excerpts.

[2] The conference, scheduled to be held at Lucknow on 5–6 March 1949, was postponed.

another name for truth. We praise the Mahatma and we pay homage to his memory, and yet we stray widely from the path he had pointed out to us. His basic lesson that only through right means can right ends be achieved is seldom remembered. Repeatedly, even in our generation, failure and disaster has faced the world because of wrong methods and wrong means. And yet we go round and round the self-same path, not even learning from hard experience.

Any effort, therefore, to direct people's minds to this basic problem is to be welcomed. There is a danger, however, that we may lose ourselves in vague and metaphysical generalization, which, though seeming to embody high truths, do not help us very much in our daily tasks. It may be necessary to survey a wide field in order to get a true perspective. But that may also lead us into a dense forest of ideas and problems, and not help us to understand clearly the duty of the moment. There is always a tendency in many of us to seek escapism in high ideals and fine phrases and not trouble to relate them to the business of life as it is today. The problem is essentially not for the few but for the many, and not only for India but for the whole world. There can be no solution of any problem today in the narrow context of a group or even of a nation. We have to think in terms of the world as a whole and then seek to understand our own particular problems in that higher context, whether they apply to morals or culture or politics or economics.

12

Culture and Wisdom[1]

I have come here with pleasure and yet with a great deal of confusion in my mind. The pleasure is that I have always looked forward to furthering the cause of cultural association of India with not only the neighbouring countries to the east and west, but with the wider world outside. It is not merely a question of wanting such cultural association, or considering it good, but rather one of the necessities of the situation which compel one to do it or else the result is infinitely worse. I earnestly hope that the formation of this Indian Council of Cultural Relations will lead to a better understanding between our people and the peoples of other countries.

Having said that, let me state quite frankly the confusion that arises in my mind. All kinds of questions crop up, rather basic questions, questions which arise from what one sees going on in the world around us. We talk of understanding each other, nations, individuals and groups, and it seems an obvious thing that people should try to understand each other and to learn from one another. Yet, whether we look through the pages of history or study current events, I sometimes find that people who know each other most quarrel most. Countries which are next door to each other in Europe or in Asia somehow rub each other up most and while knowing each other very thoroughly, that knowledge itself does not lead to greater cooperation or friendship. So what is wrong about our method or this procedure? That is not a new thing. Even the long pages of history show that. Has there been something wrong in individual nations or in the approach to this question or something else that has not worked as it should have done? Then again, we talk about cultural relations and immediately the question arises in my mind as to what exactly is this thing culture about which people talk so much. I remember when I was younger in years reading about German *kultur* and of the German people of those days trying to spread it by conquest and otherwise, and there was a big war to spread this *kultur* and to resist it. Every country and every individual seems to have a peculiar idea of culture and so when there is talk about cultural relations, while

[1] Speech at the inauguration of the Indian Council of Cultural Relations, New Delhi, 9 April 1950. File No. 40 (86)/49-PMS.

in theory that is very good, actually what happiness is that those peculiar ideas come into conflict and instead of leading to friendship they lead to more estrangements. It is a basic question—what is culture? And I am certainly not competent to give you a definition of it because I have not found it. At any rate, I do not know.

One can see each nation, each separate civilization developing its own culture, and civilization having some roots in generations past, hundreds and thousands of years past, and being intimately moulded by that initial conception which started the civilization going along its long path. One sees that conception affected by other conceptions, action and interaction between slightly varying conceptions. There is, I suppose, no so-called culture in the world which is absolutely pristine and pure and unaffected by any other culture. It simply cannot happen, just as no person can say that he belongs one hundred per cent to a particular racial type, because in the course of hundreds and thousands of years, changes and mixtures have occurred more or less.

So culture will get a little mixed up and the basic element of a particular national culture possibly remaining dominant and yet its being affected by and affecting other cultures. If that kind of thing goes on peacefully there is no harm in it. But it leads often enough to conflicts. It leads sometimes to a fear on the part of one group of what they consider their culture being rather overwhelmed by an outside or alien influence and then drawing themselves into a shell which isolates them, which prevent other thoughts and their ideas going out. That is an unhealthy situation because in any matter, and much more so in what might be called a cultural matter, stagnation is the worst. Culture, if it has any value, must have a certain depth, but it must also have a certain dynamic character. After all, culture depends on a vast number of factors. If we leave out what might be called, perhaps the basic mould that was given to it in the early stages of a nation's or a people's growth, it is affected by geography, by climate, by all kinds of events that have happened. The culture of Arabia is intimately governed by the geography and the deserts of Arabia. It grew up in that. Obviously the culture of India in the old days was affected greatly, as we see it in our literature, by the Himalayan mountains and the forests and the great rivers and other things in India. It was a natural growth from the soil. The two may mix together and produce a happy combination as they often did in various domains of culture, architecture, music, literature, etc. But where there is an attempt to impose something on the other which does not naturally grow or which does not naturally mould itself, uprooting itself, then comes conflict. Then unfortunately something also comes which is basically opposed to my mind, to all ideas of culture. And that is the isolation of the mind, the deliberate shutting up of the mind to other influences. My own view of India's history is that we can almost measure the growth and the advance of India and the decline of India from the point of view of when India had her mind open to the outside world

and when it wanted to close it up. The more it closed it up the more it became static. Life, whether of the individual or of a group or a nation or of a society, is essentially a dynamic, changing, growing thing. Whatever stops that dynamic idea of growth injures it and makes it deteriorate.

If I may with all respect say so and without meaning any ill to any person, we have had great religions and they have had an enormous effect on humanity. Yet those very religions, in the measure that they made the mind of man static, dogmatic and bigoted have had an evil effect according to my thinking. The things they said may be good, but the effect of saying anything and adding on to it that there you stop as the last word has been said, makes society static and therefore it stops the growth of culture.

How are you to balance these two essential factors? One is that the human being, individual or race or nation, must necessarily have a certain depth and a certain root somewhere. Otherwise if the individual is just superficial, he may be outwardly cultured in that superficial sense, but does not count for much. A race or a group does not count for much unless it has roots in the past, which past after all is the accumulation of generations of experience and some type of wisdom. It is essential that you have that. Otherwise you become just pale copies of something else which has no real meaning to you as an individual or as a group. On the other hand one cannot live in the roots alone. The roots even wither unless they come out in the sun and the free air and then the roots give you the sustenance, and they branch out and flower. And then one might say that you have achieved balance. It is very difficult to balance because some people think a great deal about the flowers and the leaves in the branches, forgetting that they only flourish because there is a stout root behind them. Others think so much of the roots that no flowers or leaves or branches are left, only a thick stem somewhere. So how is one to balance that and which part of it is real culture and which is not?

Does culture mean some inner growth of the person? Of course, it must. Does it means the capacity to understand the other person? I suppose so. Does it mean the capacity to make yourself understood by the other person? I suppose so. It means all that. A person, who cannot understand another's viewpoint, is to that extent limited in mind and culture because nobody, barring may be some very extraordinary human beings, can presume to have the fullest knowledge and wisdom; the other party or the other group may also have some inkling of knowledge or wisdom or truth and if we shut our minds to that, then we not only deprive ourselves of it, but we cultivate an attitude of mind which I would beg to say is opposed to that of a cultured man, because the cultured mind, having roots in itself, should have its doors and windows open, imbibing other things. It should have the capacity to understand the other's viewpoint fully even though it cannot agree with it always. It may sometimes agree, sometimes not. The question of agreement or disagreement only arises when you

understand a thing. Otherwise it is a blind negation which is not a cultured approach to any question.

I may use another word, say, science. What is the scientific approach to life's problems—one of examining everything, of seeking truth by trial and error, by experiment, never saying that this thing must be so, but trying to understand why it is so and if one is convinced of it, accepting it, and the moment some other proof comes, changing one's notions, to have an open mind, not a mind which is floating about with every gust of wind, nevertheless an open mind trying to imbibe the truth wherever one finds that. If that is culture, how far is it represented in the modern world and in the nations of today? Obviously, if it was represented more than it is, many of our problems, national and international, would be far easier of solution.

Almost every country in the world thinks that it has some special dispensation from Providence that it is of the chosen people or race and others may be good or bad but secondary, somewhat inferior human beings. It is extraordinary how this human feeling persists in all nations without any exception, whether of the East or the West. The nations of the East are strongly entrenched in their own ideas and convictions and sometimes in their own sense of superiority in regard to certain matters in life. Anyhow in the course of the last two or three hundred years they got many knocks on the head and they were humiliated and they were debased, they were exploited. And so, in spite of sometimes thinking that they were rather superior in many ways, they were forced to admit in other ways that they could be knocked about and be exploited. To some extent this knocking about process brought a sense of realism. There was a slight attempt to escape from that realism. Oh, yes, it was said, maybe we are not so advanced in the material things of life, in the technical things, in the superficial things; nevertheless, we are superior in the essential things, in the spiritual things, in moral values. I have no doubt that spiritual things and moral values are more important ultimately than other things, but the way one finds escape in the thought that one is spiritually superior simply because one happens to be in the material and physical sense inferior is surprising and is not easy to follow. It is a mere way of escape from really finding out the causes of one's deterioration.

Nationalism, of course, is a curious phenomenon which at a certain stage in a country's history gives life and growth and strength and unity; and at the same time it has a tendency to limit one because one thinks of one's country as something rather out of proportion with the rest of the world. The perspective changes, and one is continuously thinking of one's own struggles and virtues and failings to the exclusion of other thoughts with the result that the very same thing, that is nationalism, which is the symbol of growth for a people becomes a symbol of stopping that growth of the mind. Sometimes, again, nationalism when it becomes successful goes on spreading in an aggressive way and it becomes internationally a danger.

So whatever line of thought you follow, you arrive at the conclusion that you must find a certain balance between these things. Otherwise something that was good turns into evil. Culture that is essentially good looked at from a wrong point of view becomes essentially not only static but aggressive and something breeding conflict and hatred. How you are to find a balance, I do not know. And perhaps that is the problem of today apart from the great political and economic problems of the age, because behind it there seems to be a tremendous conflict in the spirit of man today, some search for something which it cannot find. They go to economic theories and those economic theories have an undoubted importance because it is just folly to talk of culture or even to talk of God, when human beings starve and die. The first thing that one has to do is to provide the normal essentials of life to human beings before you can talk about anything else and there economics comes in, and human beings today are not in a mood to put up with this suffering and starvation and inequality when they see that the burden is not equally shared. Others profit while they only have to bear the burden.

So inevitably we have to deal with these problems economically and in other ways, but I do think that behind it all there is this tremendous psychological problem and question in the minds of people. It may be that some people think about it consciously and deliberately, and others rather unconsciously and dimly, but there is this conflict in the spirit of man. How it will be resolved, I do not know. One thing that troubles me is this, that often enough people who understand each other more and more begin to quarrel more and more. Nevertheless, you cannot say from that that we should not try to understand each other because that will be completely limiting oneself and that is something which really cannot be done in the modern context of the world. Therefore, it becomes essential that we must try to understand each other in the right way. The right way is important. The right approach, the friendly approach, is important, because a friendly approach brings a friendly response. I have not a shadow of a doubt that it is a fundamental rule of human life that if the approach is good the response is good. If the approach is bad, the response is likely to be bad too. So if we approach our fellow human beings or other countries in the right way, not in any sense of surrendering anything that we consider of essential value to truth or to our own genius, but nevertheless in a friendly way with our minds and hearts open and prepared to accept whatever good comes to them, then that will lead not only to understanding, but the right type of understanding.

So I shall leave you to your own labours and to determine what is culture and what is wisdom. We grow in learning, in knowledge, in experience, till we have such an enormous accumulation of them that it becomes impossible to know exactly what we know. We are overwhelmed by this and at the same time somehow or other one has a feeling that all those put together do not necessarily

represent a growth in wisdom of the human race. I have a feeling that it may be that some people who did not have all the advantages of modern life and modern science were wiser perhaps in the essentials than most of us are. Whether we shall be able, in later times, to combine all this knowledge and scientific growth and betterment of the human species with true wisdom or not, I do not know. It is a race between various forces. I am reminded of a famous Greek poet, the saying of a very wise man:

What else is Wisdom? What of man's endeavour,
Or God's high grace, So lovely and so great?

13

Age of Contradictions[1]

A fear creeps into my mind; are all our labours likely to be swept away by something entirely beyond our control? If so, is it not more desirable to control that something or try to control it rather than to try to live in an ivory tower, working, doing good work, no doubt, but work, which somehow does not affect the essence of things today?

We have come out suddenly into a new age. The symbol of this age is the atomic bomb, atomic energy, if you like. But it is well to realize that atomic energy today is thought of in terms of the atom bomb only, not other work, perhaps later it might do other work. And if that is the symbol of this age, then everything—men's thinking, men's fears, and everything else—is conditioned by that symbol. And we seem to live under this shadow.

Has our civilization, with its very proud and magnificent record, reached somewhere near the afternoon or evening of this civilization? Have we lost the creative spirit? Have we lost that energy and faith that comes with the dawn of a civilization? Can we recapture that spirit of the dawn and convert it into something other than it is today? Or is it inevitable that the afternoon will be followed by evening, and then by the shades of night? I do not know. But my mind struggles with these problems, and the smaller problems of the day, with which you and I and all of us have to deal with, from moment to moment and we cannot ignore. Nevertheless, these problem seem small to me in comparison with this major question mark of the age.

How are we to meet this? UNESCO says, education, science and culture. Of course, how else? And yet we find education, often running into wrong channels. We find science perverted to evil ends; we find culture, instead of something that broadens and gives us poise and vision and wisdom, sometimes actually narrowing us, and actually creating wars. Of course, that is not culture; anything that separates and narrows, is not real culture. But anyhow, the word culture is used. The slogans of culture are used and each person who uses it, means something entirely different from some other person. And so, education, science and culture, which ought to help us in solving the world's problems, become barriers to that very solution.

[1] Speech at the meeting of the Indian National Commission of UNESCO, New Delhi, 24 March 1951. The session was for two days. AIR tapes, NMML. Excerpts.

How are we to get over this difficulty? Not surely by saying that education, science and culture are no good. Surely not because after all that is the only way, the only possibility and only means of our going ahead in understanding or solving these problems. So we have to adhere to them, and yet while adhering, we have to realize that these words become base coins in our mouths and in our activities, more especially, in the fields of politics, every noble word and every noble sentiment that man has ever invented or thought of becomes base coin. How then are we to deal with this?

UNESCO, I understand, has here in India and possibly elsewhere been carrying on investigations into what is called, the problem of tensions. They study tensions, tensions between capital and labour, tensions between this community and that, between this religious group and that, and so many other tensions, because our world is full of tensions and, what is worse, each one of us, even as individuals, is full of tensions. . . .

When I think of these problems all pride of intellect goes, because I have seen intellect prostituted to base ends and sometimes intellect by itself leading to nothing. All pride of achievement fades away, because of the tremendous lack of achievement that stares one in the face. So pride goes and I do not quite know what remains in its place. Perhaps, some pride does remain, because so long as there is strength in one, one must have some pride to do one's duty and one's work. Well, whatever the achievement might be, the big question thus stands, how can we, wherever and howsoever we might be situated, how can we meet this great problem of this atomic age of ours?

We find people, nations, statesmen, talk in terms of the greatest certitude, about their being right, about their undertaking some moral crusade or other, for the benefit of mankind. Sometimes, I feel that the world might be better off if there were few of these moral crusades about. Everyone wants, not only to carry on the moral crusade in his own environment, but impose his moral crusade on others. Well, when modalities or the objectives of moral crusades differ, then inevitably comes conflict. . . .

We live essentially in an age of science or engage in technological development. That goes ahead at an increasing tempo, and in doing so, has affected and will no doubt affect the lives of men, and may finally end up by the deaths of men. We can calculate and say with assurance that many of the problems of past history are capable of solution today, in terms of having the food and the clothing and the housing and the health services, and almost everything that a person requires. We can have them today. There is enough in the world for all and more. Therefore, the old reason for conflicts no longer exists and yet something is lacking. The fact of the matter is that this technological age has brought greater conflicts in its train, in spite of its promise of putting an end to conflicts. That again is a contradiction, just as, in spite of our continuous talk of peaceful progress and cooperation and mutual understanding between

nations the fact is we go in a contrary direction. In spite of our knowing each other a little more, instead of that making us appreciate and understand the other, it often brings dislike of the other. . . .

We live in this period of tremendous potential conflict, and more and more, every nation begins to think in terms just of survival, and when people think in terms of survival, it means that they are conditioned by great fear. And when fear and this desire just to survive comes up, then logical thinking and the reasoning faculty do not easily function. Then human beings forget their humanity, because whether as individuals or nations, they are just fighting to escape some dreadful terror, fighting for survival, and they do not care what happens and what they do, in order possibly to survive. It is a dreadful prospect, this struggle for survival, which brings out the worst in humanity. And if humanity goes on these lines, thinking in terms of this fear, encompassing fear, and just of survival, then that fear itself will deaden it to all human instincts, and when the real struggle for survival comes, few may survive and possibly those who survive, will probably not be the best of humanity. . . .

14

Museums and Culture[1]

What exactly a museum is and what purpose it serves is a question that can be answered in many ways. I suppose it is some kind of a congealed history, some kind of an effort to put a bit of the past locked up in your cabinets and places so that we may have a glimpse at it. It is a place where you collect beautiful objects and it is good to have beautiful objects for people to look at, because more and more people seem to lose all idea about what beauty is, and get surrounded by articles which certainly are not beautiful, whatever else they may be. It is quite extraordinary, how most people are losing completely any real appreciation of beauty. What is the reason? I am not talking of India, but of many other countries too. Whether it is symptomatic of the modern age, I do not know. But the fact remains that we are getting more and more shoddy and sometimes what is worse we seem to take pride in the fact that we are shoddy. Therefore, it is desirable to collect articles of beauty.

Let us take a thing like children's toys. Why children have to be presented with a horrible gollywog I do not know. No doubt, children are interested in animals and they should have animals to play with but why not have beautiful things, why not train them in the appreciation of beauty from their childhood onward. Instead of that they are presented with things in the shape of toys which are a caricature of anything that you see and which, no doubt, perhaps excite and incite them, but nevertheless, take them away from learning to appreciate beauty. So, because of this tendency which, it appears to me, will grow in the world—this lack of appreciation of any kind of beauty—it is desirable to collect articles of beauty from the past, or the present, so that we may have some standards at least to judge by, and that people who come there may see articles of beauty for a while at least, otherwise they may not see them generally in their lives.

But there is another aspect of a museum. I said it is congealed history. Do people go there to see just odd things oddly displayed, just to see something that existed five hundred or a thousand years ago, as an oddity, or do they go to see

[1] Speech at the inauguration of the centenary celebrations of the Madras Museum, 27 November 1951. AIR Tapes, NMML. Excerpts.

something from which some chain of ideas may come into their heads, which may be somehow related to the present or not. I do not know how history is taught because I hardly learnt history in the normal way in college. I learnt it by myself and therefore my reading was not at all guided by any expert. It was casual reading, though widespread. Anyhow, I was fascinated by history but fascination was not reading about the odd events that happened, but always rather its connection with what followed, leading up to the present. It was only then it became alive to me, otherwise it was just an odd thing—stories or something unconnected with my life or my country's life, or the world's life. But when it seems to be somehow connected in a series that is leading to something, and that leading to something is leading to the present, then only it becomes alive to me. Now, applying that to a museum, a museum which is meant really to interest and educate, must be something which connects its objects with the things which the visitors are used to, or with their lives or their environment. It should not be just a symbol of a distant and unconnected past. I do not know how far our experts think on these lines or prepare their museums on these lines. It is not the normal antiquarian's view of things. An antiquarian is necessary, of course, when you collect antiquities. But an antiquarian who himself becomes a piece of antiquity is not much good. He must have some relation to the modern world; then only he can connect that piece of antiquity to the modern world, and thereby make it a living thing for those who see it and understand it. . . .

Now, there is this grave danger in the modern world that people, in their desire and in their necessity to specialize, lose perspective of other things. They become specialists but they lose the larger view of things and therefore, perhaps, they might be said to be only specialists and nothing more. Some of you may know, a line or two, by some English poet, "a primrose by the river's brim, a yellow primrose was to him and it was nothing more". Like a botanist who studies Latin names of flowers and loses all sense of the beauty of flowers, so, we in our desire to specialize, as we must, face this danger that we may spend all our energy over that one department which we specialize in and but remain deprived of many for the rest of our life. In other words, we become experts of something and lack in wisdom about everything else, and perhaps, in the world today, the people are so learned in so many subjects and yet there is so little wisdom. We all know something about a little part of life, and very little about the larger scheme of things.

Now, coming back to the museum—a museum, which is a collection of all kinds of things of beauty or utility of the past and the present, should convey to us some idea of the larger scheme of things. It should, like everything else, ultimately lead to an understanding of the present scheme of things or help to some extent to that end. . . .

You would forgive me for these odd reflections. As I grow older, I tend to philosophize and dole out my advice to others. But I am happy to be here, to participate in the centenary celebrations of this oldest of India's museums, and I hope it will flourish and expand, and expand in the direction that I have indicated.

15

The Mind and Spirit of Man[1]

Most of us, I suppose, are burdened with this complexity of our present-day problems. We live our day-to-day lives and face our day-to-day difficulties, but somehow that is not enough. One seeks something behind that daily round to find out how we can improve basically; how we can solve these problems that affect the world; and for the one whom fate and circumstance has placed in a position of great responsibility, it is particularly difficult to avoid thinking about these problems.

During the last few weeks, I have been going about this great country and seeing multitudes of human beings, my countrymen and countrywomen, surging masses, and always the thought has come to me, what is going to happen to these people? What are they thinking, and whether we are going in the same direction, because we are sailing in the same boat. And then I thought of other multitudes in other countries. What about these vast masses of human beings? Here we are, some of us functioning on the political plane and presuming to decide the fate of nations. How far do our decisions affect these multitudes? Do we think of them, or do we live in some upper stratosphere of diplomats and politicians and the like, exchanging notes, and sometimes using harsh words against each other. Politics in this context becomes rather trivial, in this mighty context of the world and vast masses of human beings and this tremendous phase of transition through which we are passing. So, I have no particular light to throw on the problems that you have been discussing. Rather I would like to put some of the difficulties that I have in my mind, and I hope that when I have the occasion to read all the reports of what you were saying to each other, perhaps those discussions might help me to understand some of these problems.

Now, one of my chief difficulties is this: somehow it seems to me that the modern world is getting completely out of tune with what I would call the life of the mind—I leave out for the moment the life of the spirit that may be an extension of the life of the mind. Yet, the modern world is entirely the outcome of the life of the mind. After all, it is the human mind that has produced

[1] Address at the concluding session of the symposium on the Concept of Man and the Philosophy of Education in the East and West, organized by UNESCO and the Ministry of Education, New Delhi, 20 December 1951. AIR tapes, NMML. Excerpts.

everything that we see around us and feel around us. All of our proud civilization is a product of the human mind, and yet, strangely enough, one begins to feel that the function of the mind becomes less and less important in the modern world. Although there are great minds certainly, no doubt about it, but somehow, relatively speaking, mind counts for less. Mind may count for a great deal in specialized domains. It does as it accounts for great progress in those specialized domains of life, but generally speaking, in life itself, as a whole, mind counts for less and less. That is my impression. If that is true, then there is something radically wrong about the things that we do, about the type of civilization that we are building up or have built up. That is ever-changing. These are the changes which are so rapidly taking place, emphasizing other aspects of life and somehow preventing the mind from functioning as it should, and as perhaps it used to do in a more leisurely period of the world's history. Now, if that is true, then surely it is not a good outlook for the world, because the very basis on which our civilization has grown, on which man has risen step by step to the proud heights on which he stands today, the very foundation of that edifice, is shaken.

We talk about many things and they are important, and here I am in India, concerned above all with certain elementary, primary necessities of life for our people. I am concerned with such matters as food and clothing, shelter and housing for our people, with education and health for our people. Now, these are the primary necessities, and of course, unless you have those primary necessities, it seems to me rather futile to talk about the life of the mind or the life of the spirit. You can't talk of God to a starving person, you must give him food. So one has to deal with these primary necessities, it is true. Nevertheless, even in dealing with them one has some kind of ideal or objective in view. And if that ideal or objective somehow is devoid of or becomes less and less connected with the growth of the human mind, then there must be something wrong. I do not know if what I say is true. Whether you agree with it I do not know. Even if it is true, how has it come about?

Now, I am, if I may say so, a great admirer of the achievements of modern civilization, of the growth of science, and the applications of science and technological growth. I think they are tremendous and humanity has every reason to be very proud of them; and yet if those very achievements lessen the capacity for achievements in the future—and that will happen if the mind deteriorates—then surely there is something wrong about that process, and we have taken a wrong turning somewhere; because I suppose it is obvious that the mind ultimately should be dominant. I am not again mentioning the spirit, but that comes into the picture too. If the world suffers from mental deterioration as a whole, or from moral degradation, then something goes wrong with the very heart of civilization or culture; and while that civilization may last a considerable time, it grows less and less sound and ultimately it might crumble away. When

I look back on periods of past history, which are very different of course from our present age, but nevertheless of which certain periods are very outstanding, and they have shown great achievements of the human mind, while other periods have not. And one finds races achieving a high level, and then apparently fading away from the point of view of their achievements. And so I wonder, if something that led to that fading away of relatively high cultures is not happening today and producing an inner weakness in the structure of our modern civilization. Then the idea comes to me, what after all is the best environment which is likely to produce the best type of human being? You talk about education, and that obviously is very important, but apart from the school or college education the entire environment that surrounds us naturally affects the development of the human being. What is the environment that has produced in the past these great ages of history? Do we have that type of environment basically? Are we going towards it or are we going away from it in spite of the great progress that we have made in many departments of human life? All these questions trouble me.

Well, I think of the Industrial Revolution that started, one hundred and seventy to two hundred years ago, and the enormous changes, largely for the good, I think, that this Industrial Revolution has brought about. That process, I take it, is continuing still and the tempo of change becomes faster and faster. Where is it leading us to? It has led us in one direction to great triumph, in another to great wars, great conflicts and possibly greater conflicts, which threaten to engulf a large part of humanity and a common cataclysm. Now there is some essential contradiction about all this, the race between progress and building up and this other element which seeks to destroy and which is likely to destroy all that we have built up. We seem to believe, most of us, as if both were inevitable and we put up with them. Now, that seems to me very odd, that we should seek to build and at the same time look almost with equanimity on the possible destruction of all that we build when any reasonable or logical human being would think of preventing the destruction of what one has built. The destruction may be external by war and the like. But what is perhaps much more dangerous, if it is true, is this inner destruction of the mind and spirit, after which the destruction of the outer emblems of the mind and spirit may also follow. Is it some resultant of this growth of the Industrial Revolution that is overreaching itself and toppling over, you might say? Have we lost touch with the roots that give strength to a race, to humanity or to the individual, just as perhaps, a city dweller loses touch with the soil, and sometimes even with the sun; and though he may live an artificial life, in comfort and even in luxury, there is something that he lacks, something that is vital to the human being, and he begins to live more and more an artificial life, cut off, if I may say so, from the soil and the sun and thereby loses his vitality and inner core. Is that so? I am merely putting these thoughts before you because they trouble me.

Again, I find that this growth of a mechanical civilization, which it is obvious has brought such great triumphs and has helped the world so much, gradually influences the mind and makes the mind mechanical also. The mind which produced the machine to help itself, gradually becomes the slave of that machine, and we become progressively as a race, mechanically-minded. Now, I suppose, the test of the growth of an individual or society is the extent to which it possesses creative imagination and courage. But above all, creative imagination, if that is lacking or grows less and less, then again it is a sign of decay. What then is happening today? Are we making efforts to improve or trying to remove that real cause of decay or are we merely functioning somewhere on the surface, without touching that reality which is afflicting the world? It may take the shape of political conflicts, or result in economic warfare and the like. But perhaps, it is even deeper than that. I sometimes wonder, and so when these discussions take place on the concept of man, the eastern ideal or the western, they are very interesting to me, from the historical point of view, and from a cultural point of view, although I have always resisted this idea of dividing the world into the Orient and the Occident. I think, that is a very simple way of saying something and thereby deluding ourselves by dividing it in compartments like this. I do not believe in any such divisions though I do think that there are differences, there have been differences in racial and national outlooks and ideals. The talk therefore about the East and the West has little meaning to me generally. The West, the modern West as it is, meaning thereby a great part of Europe, and the Americas, had developed a certain type of civilization, more especially during the last two hundred years or so, based no doubt on certain basic traditions derived from Greece or Rome or whatever. And now this tremendous industrial growth that has made the West what it is, is called scientific and industrial growth. Now, I can see the difference is between the industrialized country and the non-industrialized country, not between the East and the West as such. I think the differences, say between India and Europe, in the Middle Ages would not have been very great. There would have been differences just as differences between countries of the Orient. There are great differences between many of the great countries of Asia, between each other. To group them together, lump them together, and call them the Orient— the East, and then group the rest together and call them the West, I think is a misleading approach as it prevents us from thinking correctly.

However, the differences had crept in largely or have been intensified by this progress of industrialization and mechanization, which has promoted material well-being tremendously and has therefore, been a blessing to humanity, though this has somehow been in the past. But, if not in the past, now perhaps, the mechanization is corroding the life of the mind and thereby encouraging a process of self-destruction. I am not talking or thinking about wars but, quite apart from it, I am talking about the rest. How are we to check this? We have

seen in history—we have seen races rise and gradually fade away. As after the fading away of great periods in Asia, it came in Europe. We are witnessing some such thing or maybe it will not take effect in our lifetime. In the past, anyway, there was one great consolation that things happened in one particular part of the world. A part of the world may even have collapsed, well, the rest carried on. Now, the whole world hangs together in life or in death. So, if this civilization fades away or collapses, it takes practically the whole world with it. There is no part of it left in a sense to survive, as in the old times it did. It may be that in what sometimes are called the Dark Ages of Europe they were however very bright ages in Asia of those days. It might have been in many parts of Asia, in China, in India, or in the Middle East or elsewhere. So that, in the old days if success or progress was very limited, disaster also was limited, both in extent and intensity. Today, when we have arrived at a period of great progress, we have also arrived at a period of great disaster. It is a little difficult for us to choose some middle way, in the sense that we can have a little progress and possibly a limited disaster. Now can we avoid that disaster? That becomes a major question. And other idealistic conceptions of the concept of man, etc., become rather academic, although they are very important. At any rate, for a person who has to carry a burden of responsibility, the practical aspects of this question trouble him greatly.

So I would have liked your conference to throw light on this question. Am I right in saying that the mental life of the world is in process of deterioration? Not chiefly I think, because the environment that has been created by this development of the Industrial Revolution, does not leave time to individuals to think, does not give them that opportunity. Of course, there are many great thinkers today, I do not deny that, but it is quite likely that they might be submerged in the mass of unthinking humanity. There again, we come up against another thing and that is, we are dealing and talking a great deal about democracy, and I have little doubt that democracy is the best method that I can see of all the various methods available to us for the governance of human beings. At the same time, we are seeing today, by today I mean in the last decade or two decades, the emergence of democracy on a mass and somewhat uncontrolled way. Now when we think of democracy, we normally think of it in the rather limited phases of the nineteenth century or the early twentieth century. Now something has happened since then owing to this remarkable technological growth and meanwhile democracy has also spread in the sense of adult suffrage and the like, with the result that we have vast masses of human beings bred by the Industrial Revolution who are not encouraged or given the opportunity to think much. Living a life, from the point of physical comfort, is ever so much better than any previous generation has ever lived, but as I said, seldom are we thinking or have the chance to think. Yet at the same time, it is that vast mass of human beings that in a democratic system, ultimately governs

or elects those who govern. Now are they likely to select the right persons more or less? That becomes a little doubtful and I think, it may be said without offence—and I certainly can say it without offence, because I belong to that tribe of politicians—that the quality of men who are selected by this modern democratic method of adult suffrage is gradually deteriorating. There are outstanding individuals chosen, no doubt, but their quality deteriorates because of this gradual lack of thinking. At the same time, the application of these modern methods of propaganda, the noise of the machine, of advertisements, prevent man from thinking. He only reacts to sound, reacts to a din, reacts to repetition, and then he turns out to be either a dictator or a dumb politician, who is insensitive and who can survive everything, and still remain standing on his two feet. Therefore, he gets elected in the end, as the others have collapsed in the din. It is an extraordinary state of affairs. It is all very well for us to praise the growth of democracy, and I am all for it. But the point I wish to make is not in regard to democracy but rather to the fact that modern life does not encourage the life of the mind. If it is so, that the life of the mind is not encouraged, then it inevitably follows that civilization deteriorates, humanity deteriorates, and ultimately, well, both collapse in some great cataclysm, or just fade away.

16

Crisis of the Spirit[1]

Often I ask myself: What is India? What is the essence of India? What are the forces that have gone to make India and how are they related to the major dominating influences of the world in the past and in the present? The subject is a vast one and covers the entire field of human activity, not only in India but elsewhere, and I suppose no single person can do justice to it. But we can take up some particular aspects of it and try to understand them. We can at least try to understand our India, although that understanding will be limited if we do not have the wider picture of the world before us.

What is culture? I look it up in the dictionary and I find a variety of definitions. One great writer has called it "the acquainting ourselves with the best that has been known and said in the world". Another definition says that it is "the training, development, or strengthening of the powers, mental or physical, or the condition thus produced; improvement or refinement of mind, morals, or tastes; enlightenment of civilization". Culture, in this sense, is something basic and international. Then there are the national aspects of culture and there can be no doubt that many nations have each developed a certain genius and individuality.

Where does India fit in? Some people have talked of Hindu culture and Muslim culture and Christian culture. I do not understand these terms, although it is true that the great religious movements have influenced the culture of a race or a nation. If I look at India, I find, as Dinkar has emphasized, the gradual growth of a composite culture of the Indian people. The origins of this culture may be traced back on the one hand to the pre-Aryan period, the civilization of Mohenjodaro, etc., and the great Dravidian civilization. On the other hand, it received a powerful impress from the Aryans who came to India from Central Asia. Subsequently, it was influenced by repeated incursions from the north-west and later by the people who came across the seas from the West. Thus, this national culture gradually grew and took shape. It had a remarkable capacity for synthesis and of absorbing new elements. So long as it did so, it was dynamic and living. In later years it lost the dynamic quality and became

[1] Foreword to *Samskriti ke Char Adhyay* by Ramdhari Sinha 'Dinkar', 1955.

essentially static which led to weakness in all fields. Throughout India's history we see the two rival and contradictory forces at work—those in favour of a synthesis and absorption and those fissiparous tendencies which separate. Today we face the same problem in a different context. There are powerful forces working for unity, not only political but cultural also. There are also forces that disrupt and lay stress on separateness.

The question, therefore, for us today is not an academic one but a vital issue, on the understanding and solution of which depends our future. Normally, it is the business of the intellectuals to give a lead in dealing with such problems, but our intellectuals have failed us. Many of them do not even seem to realize the nature of this problem, others suffer from frustration and a crisis of the spirit, not knowing where to turn.

Marxism and its progeny attracted many of the intellectuals, and there is no doubt that it gave a certain analysis of historical developments which helped us to think and to understand. But even that proved too narrow a creed and, whatever its virtue as an economic approach, it failed to resolve our basic doubts. Life is something more than economic growth, though it is well to realize that economic growth is a basic foundation of life and progress. History shows us two principles at work, the principle of continuity and the principle of change. They appear to be opposed to each other and, yet, each has something of the other. We notice that we consider sudden changes in the shape of violent revolutions or an earthquake. Yet, every geologist knows that the major changes in the earth's surface are gradual, and earthquakes are trivial in comparison to them. So also, revolutions are merely the outward evidence of a long process of change and subtle erosion. Thus, change itself is a continuous process, and even a static continuity must yield to gradual change so long as it is not overcome by complete stagnation and death.

There are periods in history when the processes and tempo of change are more in evidence. At other times, the appearance is much more static. The static period in the life of a nation is a period of progressive deterioration and weakness, leading to the decay of the creative arts and tendencies and often to political subjection.

Probably, the most powerful cultural element in India came from the union of the Aryan with the older elements in India chiefly the Dravidian. Out of this arose a mighty culture, chiefly represented by our great classical language, Sanskrit. That language, though it has its origin together with old Pahlavi in a common parent in Central Asia, became the national language of India. Both the north and the south contributed to its growth. Indeed, in later days, the south played a very important part. Sanskrit became the symbol not only of our people's thought and religion but the embodiement of the cultural unity of India. Ever since the Buddha's time, it has not been the spoken language of

the people and yet it continued to exercise this powerful influence all over India. Other great influences came in, which led to new avenues of thought and expression.

Geography made India, in her long past, almost a closed country. Surrounded by the sea and the mighty Himalayas, it was not easy of entry. Migrations took place to India in the course of thousands of years but probably there was no big migration of peoples after the coming of the Aryans. We must contrast this with the tremendous movement of peoples right across Asia and Europe, one tribe driving the other and changing the texture of the population. In India, after the Aryans came, these incursions were relatively limited. They produced their effect but did not change overmuch that basic population. It must be remembered, however, that there were marked changes even in India. The Scythians and the Huns and the many others who came to India later developed into branches of the Rajputs and claimed ancient lineage. The fact that India was for long a closed land gave it its peculiar character. We became as a race somewhat inbred. We developed some customs which are unknown and not understood in other parts of the world. Caste, in its innumerable forms, is a typical product of India. Untouchability, the objections to interdining, intermarriage, etc., are unknown in any other country. The result was a certain narrowness in our outlook. Indians, even to the present day, find it difficult to mix with others. Not only that, each caste tends to remain separate even when they go to other countries. Most of us in India take all this for granted and do not realize how it astonishes and even shocks the people of other countries.

Thus, in India, we developed at one and the same time the broadest tolerance and catholicity of thought and opinion, as well as the narrowest social forms of behaviour. This split personality has pursued us and we struggle against it even today. We overlook and excuse our own failings and narrowness of custom and habit by references to the great thoughts we have inherited from our ancestors. But there is an essential conflict between the two, and so long as we do not resolve it, we shall continue to have this split personality.

In a more or less static period these opposed elements did not come into conflict with each other much. But, as the tempo of political and economic change has grown faster, these conflicts also have come more in evidence. In the atomic age, at the threshold of which we stand, we are compelled by overwhelming circumstances to put an end to this inner conflict. To fail to do so is to fail as a nation and lose even the virtues that we have possessed.

We have to face, therefore, this crisis of the spirit in India, even as we have to face great political and economic problems. The industrial revolution is coming rapidly to India and changing us in many ways. It is an inevitable consequence of political and economic change that there should be social changes also if we are to remain as integrated human beings and an integrated nation.

We cannot have political change and industrial progress and imagine that we can continue unchanged in the social sphere. The stresses and strains will be too great and if we do not resolve them, we shall crack up.

The picture of India, as we see it, in the first millennium after Christ and indeed even before that, is very different from its later appearance. We see in those early days an exuberant, vital people, full of zest for life and adventure, carrying their message to far countries. In the realm of thought, they dared to scale the highest peaks and to pierce the heavens. They built up a magnificent language and in the realm of art, they showed creative genius of the highest order. That early period does not indicate an insular culture or a static society. We see also then the same cultural impulses surging throughout the land of India. It was from South India that the great colonizing expeditions went out to South East Asia. It was also from the South that the great Bodhidharma went to China with the message of Buddhism. North and south joined in this great adventure of life, each nourishing the other.

Then come the later centuries when a process of decay sets in, visible in the growing artificiality of language and the ornateness of our architecture. Our thoughts become largely a repetition of what has been and the creative spirit grows less and less. We become afraid of adventure either of the body or mind, and we develop the caste system and a closed-in society. We talk still, as of old, in exalted terms, but we act differently.

It is extraordinary how our professions run far ahead of our practice. We talk of peace and nonviolence and function in a different way. We talk of tolerance and construe it to mean our way of thinking only and are intolerant of other ways. We proclaim our ideal as that of a philosophic detachment even in the midst of action, that of a *sthitaprajna*, but we act on a far lower plane, and a growing indiscipline degrades us as individuals and as a community.

When the westerners came here across the seas, the closed land of India was again thrown open in a particular direction. The modern industrial civilization gradually crept in a passive way. New thoughts and ideas invaded us and our intellectuals developed the habit of thinking like British intellectuals. That shaking up and opening out was good in its own way and it began to give us some understanding of the modern world. But this cut off these intellectuals from the mass of the people who were little affected by this new wave of thought. Our traditional thinking was displaced and those who still clung to it did so in a static and uncreative way, totally unrelated to modern conditions.

Now this faith in western thoughts is itself being shaken and so we have neither the old nor the new, and we drift not knowing whither we are going. The younger generation has no standards left, nothing to direct their thinking or control their action.

This is a dangerous situation and if not checked and improved, is likely to lead to grave consequences. It may be that we are passing through an age of

transition, political, economic and social, and these are the inevitable consequences of such a period. But in the atomic age no country is likely to be given many chances to correct itself, and failure may well mean disaster.

Even if we do not understand fully the mighty forces that are at work in the world, we must at least endeavour to understand what India is and how this nation has developed its composite personality with its many facets and yet with an enduring unity. No one section of the community in India can lay claim to the sole possession of the mind and thought of India. Each part has contributed its share in making this country what it is. If we do not understand this basic fact, we do not understand India at all and if we do not understand India, we cannot function adequately or render any effective service to this country of ours.

17

History in Perspective[1]

The old idea of writing a history of any one country has become progressively out of date. It is impossible today to think of the history of a country isolated from the rest of the world. The world is getting integrated. We have really to consider history today in a world perspective.

What is the basic philosophy of history? I try to think of history as a process that leads man to higher and better stages of progress. Then I find to my surprise that those higher stages have been represented by great men in the long past. Having been fascinated by the scientific and technological civilization which has been built in Europe and in America, I gradually come to a stage when it seems to me to have stopped. I begin seeking for something deeper than merely the physical aspect of civilization. I find that my mind is more interested in what Plato or the Buddha said, which has a timelessness about it. So I wonder if our present–day history, having fulfilled its destiny in so far as science and technology are concerned, is at all moving on to a higher plane of human existence. I do not presume that the average historian will be able to answer such a question unless he himself becomes a great seer who can pierce the veil of the future. But he can help in putting things in proper perspective.

[1] Inaugural Address at the Asian History Congress, New Delhi, 9 December 1961. JN Papers, NMML. Excerpts.

III

Religion, Tolerance and Communalism

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1

What is Religion?[1]

Words are well known to be, by themselves, very imperfect means of communication, and are often understood in a variety of ways. No word perhaps in any language is more likely to be interpreted in different ways by different people as the word 'religion' (or the corresponding words in other languages). Probably to no two persons will the same complex of ideas and images arise on hearing or reading this word. Among these ideas and images may be those of rites and ceremonial, of sacred books, of a community of people, of certain dogmas, of morals, reverence, love, fear, hatred, charity, sacrifice, asceticism, fasting, feasting, prayer, ancient history, marriage, death, the next world, of riots and the breaking of heads, and so on. Apart from the tremendous confusion caused by this immense variety of images and interpretations, almost invariably there will be a strong emotional response which will make dispassionate consideration impossible. The word 'religion' has lost all precise significance (if it ever had it) and only causes confusion and gives rise to interminable debate and argument, when often enough entirely different meanings are attached to it. It would be far better if it was dropped from use altogether and other words with more limited meanings were used instead, such as: theology, philosophy, morals, ethics, spirituality, metaphysics, duty, ceremonial, etc. Even these words are vague enough, but they have a much more limited range than 'religion'. A great advantage would be that these words have not yet attached to themselves, to the same extent, the passions and emotions that surround and envelop the word 'religion'.

What then is religion (to use the word in spite of its obvious disadvantage)? Probably it consists of the inner development of the individual, the evolution of his consciousness in a certain direction which is considered good. What that direction is will again be a matter for debate. But, as far as I understand it, religion lays stress on this inner change and considers outward change as but the projection of this inner development. There can be no doubt that this inner development powerfully influences the outer environment. But it is equally obvious that the outer environment powerfully influences the inner development. Both act and interact on each other. It is a commonplace that in the modern

[1] From *An Autobiography*, pp. 378–80.

industrial West outward development has far outstripped the inner, but it does not follow, as many people in the East appear to imagine, that because we are industrially backward and our external development has been slow, therefore our inner evolution has been greater. That is one of the delusions with which we try to comfort ourselves and try to overcome our feeling of inferiority. It may be that individuals can rise above circumstances and environment and reach great inner heights. But for large groups and nations a certain measure of external development is essential before the inner evolution can take place. A man who is the victim of economic circumstances, and who is hedged and restricted by the struggle to live, can very rarely achieve inner consciousness of any high degree. A class that is downtrodden and exploited can never progress inwardly. A nation which is politically and economically subject to anotlier and hedged and circumscribed and exploited can never achieve inner growth. Thus even for inner development external freedom and a suitable environment become necessary. In the attempt to gain this outer freedom and to change the environment so as to remove all hindrances to inner development, it is desirable that the means should be such as not to defeat the real object in view. I take it that when Gandhiji says that the means are more important than the end, he has something of this kind in view. But the means should be such as to lead to the end, otherwise they are wasted effort, and they might even result in even greater degradation, both outer and inner.

"No man can live without religion," Gandhiji has written somewhere. "There are some who in the egotism of their reason declare that they have nothing to do with religion. But that is like a man saying that he breathes, but that he has no nose." Again he says: "My devotion to truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means." Perhaps it would have been more correct if he had said that most of these people who want to exclude religion from life and politics mean by that word 'religion' something very different from what he means. It is obvious that he is using it in a sense—probably moral and ethical more than any other—different from that of the critics of religion. This use of the same word with different meanings makes mutual comprehension still more difficult.

A very modern definition of religion, with which the man of religion will not agree, is that of Professor John Dewey. According to him, religion is "whatever introduces genuine perspective into the piecemeal and shifting episodes of existence"; or again "any activity pursued on behalf of an ideal end against obstacles, and in spite of threats of personal loss, because of conviction of its general and enduring value, is religious in quality." If this is religion, then surely no one can have the slightest objection to it.

Romain Rolland also has stretched religion to mean something which will probably horrify the orthodox of organized religions. In his *Life of Ramakrishna*, he says:

"'. . . many souls who are or who believe they are free from all religious belief, but who in reality live immersed in a state of super-rational consciousness, which they term Socialism, Communism, Humanitarianism, Nationalism and even Rationalism. It is the quality of thought and not its object which determines its source and allows us to decide whether or not it emanates from religion. If it turns fearlessly towards the search for truth at all costs with single-minded sincerity prepared for any sacrifice, I should call it religious; for it presupposes faith in an end to human effort higher than the life of existing society, and even higher than the life of humanity as a whole. Scepticism itself, when it proceeds from vigorous natures true to the core, when it is an expression of strength and not of weakness, joins in the march of the Grand Army of the religious Soul."

I cannot presume to fulfil the conditions laid down by Romain Rolland, but on these terms I am prepared to be a humble camp–follower of the Grand Army.

2

Intolerance[1]

Recent events in India have made it painfully clear that intolerance of another's belief and religious observances is widely prevalent, and often leads to conflict between persons professing different faiths. In spite of efforts to the contrary this intolerance is increasing and is poisoning the foundations of all national and civic life. It is felt by each community that the leaders of the other communities are partisan and irrational and blindly support their coreligionists in all their deeds and misdeeds. Passion and prejudice are displacing sanity and reason, and every kind of progress is becoming most difficult. There can be no effective peace in India till the spirit of intolerance is exorcised. Unity will only come after toleration is understood and practised. It is necessary therefore that the essentials of toleration be proclaimed in clear and definite language and should be brought home to the people of the country.

There must be perfect toleration of other faiths and beliefs and religious practices, and every man or woman must have full liberty to hold and practise and give expression to his faith. There must be no persecution for the holding of any opinions on matters of religion.

The very first essential of toleration is the protection of all places of worship to whatsoever religion they may belong. No provocation of any kind whatever can be deemed to be sufficient to excuse a desecration or attack, and all such desecrations must be condemned.

Conflicts frequently arise between persons of different faiths on the most trivial and non-essential matters. In times of tension and anger, acts are done which are meant to annoy or wound the religious susceptibilities of another. These provocations are highly undesirable and should be discouraged. They will automatically cease with the return of normal times. But it must be borne in mind that any amount of provocation accompanying an act, otherwise justified and permitted by the principle of toleration, does not entitle a person

[1] Draft note on the Delhi Conference Maulana Mohammad Ali Papers, Jamia Millia Islamia. The note is in Jawaharlal Nehru's handwriting and was presumably written sometime in September 1924. SWJN, Vol. 2, pp. 184–5.

The Unity Conference was held in Delhi from 26 September to 2 October 1924, to discuss ways and means of promoting communal harmony.

to retaliate or interfere with the due performance of that act. There can be no interference in such cases and it must be left to the good sense of the individual or group concerned not to wound unnecessarily the feelings of sister communities. Cow sacrifice has been a fruitful source of conflict. Toleration means that no Hindu must interfere with this, however provocative it may be. He may only request and leave the decision to the other. A very recent but an almost equally fruitful source of trouble has been the playing of music in Hindu temples and when passing mosques. The blowing of the *shankh* has been specially objected to. Toleration again signifies that a Hindu may blow his *shankh* where he pleases and may play his music even when passing mosques and no Mohammadan must interfere. Only a request can be made.

Every individual has a right to follow his own faith and to change it whenever he so wills. He has further the right to convert or re-convert, by arguments and persuasion, another, provided that on no account must force or unfair means be used. In the case of minor boys and girls under 16, to avoid the possibility of unfair pressure, no attempt should be made to convert them and they should be handed over to people of their own community. Mass conversions are also, in the present state of the country, extremely inexpedient.

3

Politics and Religion[1]

I have just read the special statement issued by the Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Maharashtra Conference and the President and the Secretary of Maharashtra Provincial Congress Committee,[2] in explanation of the attitude taken up by the Maharashtra Conference in regard to social and communal problems. My name has been mentioned in this statement in support of the contention that religion and politics should be divorced from each other, and certain conclusions which appear to me remarkable, have been drawn from this premise. I have certainly referred to this subject repeatedly in my public utterances but my words must have been lacking in clarity to have led some people to imagine the very reverse of what I intended. I have stated that the so-called religion in India today encroaches on every department of life—political, social, economic, cultural—and I have taken strong exception to this and have expressed a wish that it should not be permitted to make this encroachment. If religion, or rather what is called religion, in India continues to interfere with everything, then it will not be a mere question of divorcing it from politics, but of divorcing it from life itself.

If the high priests of religion and the shining lights of communal organizations are to decide the question of untouchability and all other social problems, the division of provinces and the methods of election and similar problems, what exactly is the function of the National Congress or of other political organizations? The Congress might as well liquidate itself instead of continuing an existence which is humiliating and futile. It will not discuss the live problems of the day; it will only carry on an academic debate on such subjects as the communal organizations in their wisdom agree to leave to the Congress.

This is an intolerable position for the least of our organizations. For the Congress, it is unthinkable. Indeed the Congress has always in the past taken a lead in social and communal matters and I am sure it will continue to do so unless it wants to commit *harakiri* or to die of inanition. Perhaps there is no subject on which it has taken up a stronger attitude than the one of untouchability,

[1] Statement to the press. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 17 May 1928.

[2] They had said: "The principle of divorce of religion and politics recently advocated by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, was found acceptable by the Subjects Committee."

and to say today that this is outside the purview of the Congress because it smacks of religion is an amazing assertion. The Congress has also taken up a clear and definite attitude in regard to the redistribution of provinces, the separation of Sind, and the methods of election and representation. It is open to the Congress to change its opinion if it chooses. But it is not open to anyone to say that such and such subjects are outside the scope of the Congress. The Congress does not acknowledge the right of the British Parliament to interfere with us politically or otherwise, much less is it likely to agree to any dictation or interference from religious or communal organizations in the social or economic sphere.

The Congress stands for Indian freedom, the freedom of the entire people of India, not the freedom of a class only which will dominate over other classes and while it carries on the struggle for political freedom and against political reaction, it strives equally for social freedom and against social reaction. In particular, it has declared war against untouchability and all that it implies. And neither of the two struggles admits of any compromise. There can be only one end to them: complete political freedom or independence, and complete social freedom, that is, the right of every man and woman to have the fullest opportunity for development without any restrictions or barriers of religion, caste, custom or economic privilege.

4

Sanatanists[1]

7 March 1933

My dear Bapu,

Thank you for your letter[2] and the first two copies of *Harijan*.[3] I read through the *Harijan* of course with interest, and delighted to see the old rapier touch of overmuch kindness and inexhaustible patience which extinguishes, or as you say neutralizes, the opponent. I pity the poor Sanatanists. With their anger and abuses and frantic cursing, they are no match for this kind of subtle attack. And yet the power of stupidity and conservatism and entrenched privilege in this world is amazing. Even mahatmas and saints cannot easily upset this combination unless circumstances have prepared the ground. Have you read Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan*—the play about Joan of Arc? If not I wish you would do so, and especially the preface of the play. It is quite a little thing and will not take much time. A short while ago I sent a copy of the book to Indu and you could easily commandeer it from her.

The tribe of Sanatanists is of course doomed because they are relics of a bygone age. Their very anger shows the extent of the danger that confronts them. Under strain all tolerance disappears, and their intolerance at present is a sign of the great strain you are putting on them. It is all very well for the likes of Sapru and me (a curious combination!) to talk pompously and in a superior way of our tolerance in matters of religion when neither of us has any religion worth talking about; or for us to bless the movement for temple entry when neither has the remotest desire to go within a hundred miles of a temple except, so far as I am concerned, to see the architecture and the statuary! But touch either of us on some particular subject and you will find the raw side and there will be little of tolerance then. Who is more intolerant than you are in certain matters? The fact is real tolerance hardly exists; what goes under the name of

[1] To Gandhi, JN Correspondence, NMML. Excerpts.

[2] In his letter of 15 February 1933 Mahatma Gandhi had written, "The fight against Sanatanists [orthodox Hindu] is becoming more and more interesting if also increasingly difficult. The one good thing is that they are men awakening from a long lethargy. The abuses they are hurling at me are wonderfully refreshing. I am all that is bad and corrupt on this earth. But the storm will subside for I apply the sovereign remedy of ahimsa, non-retaliation. . . . The more I ignore the abuses the fiercer they are becoming. But it is the death dance of the moth around a lamp."

[3] The first issue of *Harijan* was published on 11 February 1933.

tolerance is indifference. What we do not value we make a virtue of tolerating in others. A person who is not prepared to be aggressively intolerant about something or another is a pretty useless individual. So I feel a little sympathy—of an inverted kind—for the Sanatanists. They value something for which they are prepared to fight. The issue is clarified. The dangerous people are always those who are dodging and avoiding difficulties in an effort to ignore them or forget them, or are looking at them with one eye only!

Of course, if you will stir up stagnant matters there will be bad smell, and the Hindu social structure has stagnated long enough in all conscience. My own remedy for a stagnant pool would be to drain it completely and let the sun dry and purify the bottom and the sides. Cool fresh water can then be poured in and arrangements made for it to keep running on, so that there may be no stagnation again. Superficial drainage can never clean the accumulations of filth at the bottom. But you are emptying the tank to some extent and maybe we shall see the bottom!

The *Harijan*, I take it, will not convert a single bigoted Sanatanist. But it will no doubt influence vast numbers of others whose eyes have so far been closed to our own social evils. We get used very soon to the dirt round us. I wish the *Harijan* would give detailed facts about the suppressed classes—how they are treated in various parts of the country, their disabilities, and especially their economic condition, in so far as this is due to social conditions. This mass of facts will impress the mental person and overwhelm the Sanatanist. There will be no spectacular conversion of the latter in spite of your sweet reasonableness. If I may give you a quotation from an eminently respectable Victorian—John Stuart Mill: "We are the last persons to under-value the power of moral convictions. But the convictions of the mass of mankind run hand in hand with their interests or class feelings. We have a strong faith, stronger than either politicians or philosophers generally have, in the influence of reason and virtue over men's minds; but it is in that of the reason and virtue of our own side of the question. We expect few conversions by the mere force of reason from one end to the other."

You have recently had a criticism of the *Harijan*, or rather your article in it, from an old school master. As you like criticisms, here is another—a superficial one! My first view of the *Harijan* was not agreeable. Suddenly it brought to my mind by its general appearance—size, get-up, type etc.—that old and highly respected organ of pompous futility, the *Indian Social Reformer*.[4] I do not know if this worthy but utterly useless and humourless paper still carries on in its ponderous manner for the edification of the dull and sober. I have no grievance against it if it keeps away from me. Only, the outward resemblance to it of the *Harijan* was not a point in the latter's favour. Of course the resemblance vanished when I started reading the paper.

[4] A weekly started in Bombay in 1890, and edited by K. Natarajan.

But I must protest against the apology for an envelope in which your letter came. If Vallabhbhai is responsible for it, much as I love him, I must make it clear that envelope-making is not his strong line. Or perhaps the fault is not entirely his when the raw material he is supplied with comes from the waste paper basket.

Forgive me for my superficiality. I like my diamonds smooth and polished. You have shown us the art and style of living life in the grand manner. That is the real thing, but why should we ignore style and art in the little things of life? Most of us cannot reach the snowy heights. Would you deprive us of the flowers in the valleys?

I have written a long enough letter already and yet many of the things I wished to say remain unsaid. What is the use of my writing about the *Harijan* movement? You have more than enough of the subject. I would have liked to write to you of some of my interests and occupations, just to divert and refresh your mind. Being prevented from activity in the present I live a little in the future, but largely in the past. I should like to tell you of the delightful civilization of the Gobi desert thirteen hundred years and more ago, where a strange mixture of Indian and Chinese and Russian culture flourished and even Roman culture had a look in, and Sanskrit was the language of learning, and the Buddha legend the golden link that joined these countries of Asia; and of the origins of Gothic architecture in Gandhara or Afghanistan and Persia nearly a thousand years before the Europe of the middle ages, in a passionate fervour of faith, built up those wonderful Gothic cathedrals which go up almost like visible prayers to the sky; and of the vivid life of Central Asia in those early days and the varied caravans, full of rich and beautiful merchandise, and accompanied by many a scholar and a pilgrim, which passed to and fro between western Asia and India and the Far East, and, later, of another world in this very region, the Arab world, also pulsating with life; and, in the Indonesian waters, of the empire of Sri Vijaya,[5] a real bit of India abroad, where Indian culture was supreme and Indian art is said to have reached its zenith. And I could also accompany you in thought across these vast spaces of Central Asia now and see the changes that time has wrought, and unearth from under the hot sands of the deserts the relics of ancient days which tell us so much of peoples and cultures and civilizations that have been long dead. And so I could go on and on to find an outlet for my suppressed energy till my long letter drives you to distraction and the jail authorities to something worse! . . .

Yours affly.,
Jawaharlal

[5] The empire of Sri Vijaya spread from Sumatra to Malaya and parts of Indonesia between the 7th and the 13th centuries. It declined after the 13th century.

5

Congress and Communalism[1]

From press reports it appears that Mr. M.A. Jinnah has issued some kind of a challenge to me, though I have not been able to make out what this is about and why he should think it necessary to issue challenges.[2] Nor have I any recollection of any previous challenge to which he refers. Mr. Jinnah is further reported to have said that he is fighting the Congress leadership which is misleading the Hindus. In the same week Mr. Fazlul Huq has called upon Muslims to prepare for direct action against Hindus and has threatened to use a big rod against those he disapproves of.[3] He looks forward to communal conflicts and prophesies dire happenings in which he will play a prominent role. All this frank incitement to communalism and hatred and conflict is strange language which one has not associated so far with political leaders and those in positions of responsibility. I have no taste or aptitude for controversy of this kind and I can only regret that matters which should be discussed dispassionately and with the ordinary courtesies of public life should be dealt with in such a manner. Whoever wishes to fight the Congress on the communal issue will have to fight in the air, for the Congress will have nothing to do with such internecine conflicts. We have fought, not without success, the mighty power of British imperialism and that fight we shall continue till imperialism flourishes no more in India. In that fight we shall gladly cooperate with every individual and group in India; whatever our minor differences might be. We think in terms of no other fight, and we shall strain every nerve and do our utmost to gain the confidence and goodwill of all our countrymen. Mr. Fazlul Huq's approach is

[1] Statement to the press, Bombay, 1 January 1938. *The Hindustan Times*, 3 January 1938.

[2] Speaking at Calcutta on 26 December 1937 Jinnah said: "I am not fighting Hindus. I am fighting a leadership which is misleading Hindus . . . I had thrown out a challenge many months ago to Jawaharlal Nehru and I throw out the challenge now. Let him come and sit with us and let us formulate a constructive and practical and ameliorative programme which will remove poverty and hunger and give immediate relief to the poor."

[3] At a meeting of the All India Muslim Students Federation at Calcutta on 28 December 1937, Fazlul Huq said: ". . . I have got a stern rod for those who preach communalism and disturb the peace of the country. We must hold fast and avoid all separatist tendencies. We are surrounded by enemies on all sides and we must therefore be ready for the fight."

one of threats and angry defiance. Mr. Jinnah's approach is anything but friendly. But I should like to assure Mr. Jinnah, on behalf of my colleagues and myself, that even without the issue of challenges, any statement or proposal by Mr. Jinnah will always have the most careful consideration. We are always prepared to sit down and consider any of the problems which afflict India. So far as the minorities question is concerned, it is the declared and well-established policy of the Congress not only to do full justice to them, but to go even beyond that in order to inspire confidence and goodwill in them. The Congress can conceive of no freedom for India which is not an equal freedom for all the various religious communities which inhabit India and in which all do not share equally and have full opportunities of growth and development. So far as religious and cultural matters are concerned it has given the fullest possible assurances and declared that these should be incorporated in our fundamental rights in the constitution. A further assurance has been given in regard to personal law. In regard to certain political rights, the Communal Award stands for the present and we have stated repeatedly that we seek no change except with the concurrence of those concerned. We have further declared that we shall stand by the provisional agreement which was arrived at between Babu Rajendra Prasad, acting as Congress President, and Mr. Jinnah. What remains? If there is anything of importance left over, let us have it out by all means and consider it. My difficulty is that I do not know what the argument is about.

Essentially the Congress is a political body acting on the national and political plane, and inevitably dealing with economic questions. All these overlap communal and religious boundaries. Because of the strength that has come to the Congress from the organized masses of this country, and because of the growing importance of India, the Congress functions also to some extent on the international plane. This is bound to grow. This also has nothing to do with religious or communal questions.

I welcome the recent reorientation of the Muslim League and some of its resolutions which have brought it much nearer, in theory at least, to the Congress. I welcome its new objective of independence.[4] I hope this theory will be translated into practice and strengthen the anti-imperialist struggle.

I would beg Mr. Jinnah to remember what the Congress is today. It is very different from what it was in the days when he was associated with it. During this period it has grown remarkably and is today an organization with thirty-one lakhs of members actually on its rolls, of whom about a hundred thousand are Muslims. It influences scores of millions of others. But apart from the vast numbers it influences, it has succeeded, by its continuous work among the

[4] At its Lucknow session held from 15 to 18 October 1937 the Muslim League passed a resolution "to establish in India full independence in the form of a federation of free and democratic states in which rights and interests of Mussalmans and other minorities are adequately safeguarded in the constitution."

masses and its campaigns of direct action, in developing political consciousness among the people and in creating strength and self-reliance in them. These millions, though more disciplined than ever before and capable of united action, are not dumb sheep who can be driven at the will of a few leaders, howsoever honoured and respected the later might be. Even our village committees are vital bodies having a will of their own and striving to express it. The Congress is thus a vast democratic organization, influenced greatly by its leadership no doubt, but essentially reacting to the pressure and urges coming up from its tens of thousands of local committees.

What are our major problems today? Politically, the fight against the proposed federation and for independence; socially and in the sphere of economics, the fight against poverty and unemployment, and the necessity to lighten the burdens of our masses and raise their standards to human levels. There are ever so many other matters of importance and demanding attention—education, medical relief and sanitation, the development of planned industry—but before we can grapple with them the basic problems must be solved. In facing these basic problems of federation and independence and poverty and unemployment we come up against great vested interests, imperialistic and semi-feudal. The recent decisions of the Muslim League lead me to hope that that organization is beginning to think of their problems in the same light as we have done for so many years. If so, let us cooperate by all means with each other and with all other anti-imperialist elements in the country in this fight for freedom, whether the method of fighting is by direct action or otherwise.

May I express the hope that any further approach to the communal or minorities question will be a dispassionate one, and will not seek to rouse bitterness and hatred which can never help in the consideration of any problem? In this dynamic and revolutionary age, pregnant with big possibilities, those of us who have a measure of influence with our countrymen dare not lose sight of the big things or encourage passions which weaken us and lower us in the world's esteem.

6

Communal Disturbances[1]

New Delhi, 15 October 1946

Dear Lord Wavell,

I am going to the Frontier tomorrow morning, but my mind is full of what is happening in East Bengal. Both the reconstitution of Interim Government, important as it is, and my Frontier visit, which I have looked forward to for so long, have suddenly become of secondary importance. Indeed, I have come seriously to think whether it serves any useful purpose for me to be in the Interim Government if an important part of India sinks to barbarism or something much worse. The accounts we have received and are receiving from hour to hour are incredible, and yet there can be little doubt that they are largely true. A vast area of Bengal has ceased to have any government functioning, any security, and has just become the happy hunting-ground of the worst elements in the community. Mass slaughter, arson, burning of human beings, rape, abduction on a large scale, forcible conversions and all manner of other horrible things are happening.

For at least two or three weeks past we have been receiving warnings that this was going to happen in East Bengal. Indeed, it began in Dacca some time back. Instead of being stopped in time it was allowed to grow, and it is now spreading to other districts. Bengal, which has long led India in many ways, has rapidly become a shambles and a ruin. It is a small matter to discuss legal responsibilities when such a horrible catastrophe overtakes a people. It is evident that the Bengal Government is completely incapable of controlling the situation. Indeed, many people think that they have no desire to control it. You have told us that this is the domain of provincial autonomy and that for the rest it is a special responsibility of the Governor and the Viceroy. It may be so, but I should like to know how that responsibility is discharged either by the Provincial Government or the Governor when these conditions that are worse than war are allowed to prevail over wide areas and for indefinite periods. It would appear that not only Government but also general and special responsibilities have all ceased to function in these parts of Bengal. Only the gangster, the hooligan and other anti-social elements function there.

[1] To Lord Wavell. *The Transfer of Power*, 1942–7, Vol. 8, pp. 732–3. Excerpts.

Surely it serves little purpose to say that all this is due to communal friction and to divide up the blame between various parties or groups. Conditions are difficult in various parts of India, but it has become the special province of Bengal to indulge in this horror and frightfulness. There was the famine three years ago. There was the Calcutta killing two months ago, and there is now this mass slaughter, etc. in Noakhali and the surrounding districts which, if reports are correct, is far worse than the Calcutta killing.[2] Law and special and other responsibilities have no meaning when they become completely incapable of controlling such a situation. It is a terrible responsibility for all those in charge. But it is also a terrible responsibility for us and we too have to answer before the people of India. What is the good of our forming the Interim Government of India if all that we can do is to watch helplessly and do nothing else when thousands of people are being butchered and subjected to infinitely worse treatment?

I am greatly perturbed. I feel that we must face this issue somehow or else we retire from the public scene.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

[2] As a sequel to the Calcutta killing, lawlessness and mob violence broke out in several villages of Noakhali district in East Bengal. It led to mass murder of Hindus, looting, arson, forcible mass conversion and desecration of places of worship. The violence also spread to the neighbouring district of Tipperah.

7

Bihar Disturbances[1]

Patna, 5 November 1946

My dear,

Why exactly I am writing to you just at this present moment, nearing midnight, when I am tired out, I do not quite know. But suddenly after the excessive strain of the last two days I had a feeling of reaction and relaxation and I thought of you and wanted to write.

This evening I returned by air from Bhagalpur. On arrival I learnt that the military had fired on a peasant mob in the rural areas some miles from here, and about 400 had been killed. Normally such a thing would have horrified me. But would you believe it? I was greatly relieved to hear it! So we change with changing circumstances as layers of fresh experience and feeling cover up the past accumulation.

I have had horror enough during the past two days. Something incredible has happened here, or something that I would have refused to believe in, a few days ago. Hindu peasant mobs have behaved in a manner that is the extreme of brutality and inhumanity. How many have been done to death by them I do not yet know, but it must be a vast number. To think that the simple, unsophisticated, rather likable Bihar peasant can go completely mad *en masse* upsets all my sense of values.

For a few days they had it their own way, with few checks or hindrances. And so when the news came that they have been stopped at last in one place and that 400 of them had died, I felt that the balance had been very slightly righted.

I do not know how long I shall stay here—I have forgotten Delhi and all else for the moment. All I am concerned with is Bihar at present. As soon as I see light here I go back to Delhi.

I am very tired and sleepy now.

Love,

Jawahar

[1] To Padmaja Naidu, Padmaja Naidu Papers, NMML.

8

Do not Kill Your Neighbour[1]

It is a matter of shame for me to come down here and ask you to observe the basic principles of civilized conduct when so many problems, national and international, are facing us and need solution. Things which even a child understands have to be repeated to you at this stage—that you should not kill your neighbour or set houses on fire or loot property which does not belong to you. My mind is busy with the great problems facing India. There are the questions of establishing new relations with foreign countries[2] and other matters relating to the future organization of the world that are being discussed at New York.[3] India has to play an important part in these affairs. But no less important are the internal problems of poverty, illiteracy, disease and a host of other points that have to be solved. At such a crucial hour in the history of the nation I have to come to Bihar to impress upon you an elementary law of life: Do not kill your neighbour. This has to be impressed upon those who have fought for the country's freedom and have been shouting "Long live revolution". How surprising and at the same time how sad!

You should realize that you have by your conduct reached the stage of animality when nothing but the primal instinct of preserving one's life works to the exclusion of the rest. No, but you are even worse than animals, as animals at least do not attack in a herd. This is not the standard of a civilized nation. If any Hindu or Muslim thinks that he is saving his religion by all these communal riots, let him make himself happy. But it all appears very low by the yardstick of civilized behaviour. By no standard of civilized conduct can acts of lawlessness and killing of neighbours be justified. There can be no justification for stooping to bestiality, simply because some of your fellowmen have lost

[1] Speech at a public meeting at Patna, 6 November 1946. From *The Searchlight* and *The Hindu*, 7 November 1946. Excerpts.

[2] It was announced on 23 October 1946 that the Government of India and the USA had decided to raise the status of their respective diplomatic missions to the rank of embassies.

[3] Vijayalakshmi Pandit led the Indian delegation to the meeting of the United Nations General Assembly which began its session at New York on 23 October 1946. Among the subjects of discussion were the question of new entrants to the UNO, and the attempt of the small powers to secure abolition of the veto right of the Great Powers.

their heads elsewhere. I have heard students and other "ism"–*wallahs*[4] shouting slogans, but what is happening in this province is pure and simple hooliganism and it is your first and foremost duty to stop it at once and at all costs. To fix the responsibility on the hooligans alone is not enough. You cannot shift the responsibility by simply saying that you did not take part in it individually. Everyone is responsible for the tragedy. The onus is also on the leadership for if the leaders get the adulation, they must also bear the opprobrium. If they cannot control the situation, it will certainly go against them.

What happened in Noakhali is certainly bad enough, but surely that cannot wash away the sins committed in Bihar. I fail to understand how the simple-minded kisans of Bihar are maddened in this way to behave like beasts. I have heard shouts of *Delhi Chalo* from them. But their actions have made Delhi distant for us for the time being, as I cannot go back to Delhi leaving things as they are after what I have heard and seen in Bihar.

It will take time to discuss the genesis of the trouble. The first task before us is to extinguish the fire that has enveloped the province. I am not perturbed over the killing as everyone has to die one day or the other. But what I am concerned about is the direction in which the country is being forced by these riots. The reports that I received have shocked me greatly and I have been questioning myself—Is my confidence in the nation and the people misplaced? No, I think it is all a temporary phase of madness. This is bound to be cured. But then if people have gone mad, how can they be entrusted with power? How can the destiny of the country be placed in their hands? A mad man has to be sent to the madhouse so long as he is mad. To escape that position and justify their capacity for responsibility people must return to sanity at once.

There is an atmosphere of suspicion prevailing in the province. People have met me in the villages and even in the town of Patna itself expressing their fear of their neighbours. It appears both Hindus and Muslims are panicky and are conjuring nightmares. All fear must be shaken off as fear is the greatest evil and it paralyses strength and ultimately leads to destruction. There was a time when people were suffering from political fear and lived in fear of the magistracy and the police. But then came the Mahatma and helped them to conquer this fear. Must they now be afraid of their neighbours? I regret that the fear of the ruling race, which has been dispelled by the untiring efforts of Mahatma Gandhi, should now be supplanted by the fear of their own countrymen. For the good of the country, if not for anything else, this fear must be expelled for good. You should shed all fear and discontinue shouting of slogans which create panic for the time being. No country can progress if its people are afraid of each other.

India is now a powerful country. She has become dynamic. She is expanding, not of course to enslave other countries but for her own full development.

[4] Persons professing ideologies.

Her energies have been released. Now, no one can stop her onward march. There is, however, the danger that her energies may be diverted to wrong channels against which people must guard. But I am sure that this new India, this mighty India, energetic and strong, will enable people to rise above their present fear from which they have come to suffer. A nation in its collective expansive move sweeps away many of the shortcomings of its members. And I am confident people will begin to live as good neighbours.

9

Bengal and Bihar Situation[1]

The newspapers are full of communal troubles and riots and bloody murders and much worse. No one, certainly not the Government, desires to suppress facts. This House must be seized of the facts so that it may form a proper judgement and devise remedies. The facts are bad enough, terribly bad. And yet what often appears in the newspapers is something far removed from facts and the manner of presentation is such as to inflame public passion. I trust, and I am sure the House will agree with me, that it is the duty of all of us, and more especially of the Honourable Members, to be exceedingly careful in these days of crisis and disaster, to take every care not to say or do anything which might excite the people and worsen an already bad situation. One of the worst features of the situation is the dominance of rumours which exaggerate everything and sometimes created out of nothing. The most fantastic accounts spread rapidly and are believed in. We have to suffer not only insecurity and public disorder, but something which is even worse because it feeds and nurtures that disorder. This is anarchy of the mind. It is just when crisis faces us that we have to maintain the equilibrium of our minds.

To give an account of the communal trouble in the country is to deal with a chain of events going back into the past. One evil action leads to another which again becomes the ostensible cause of further evil. The preaching and practice of hatred and violence inevitably sows seeds which yield bitter fruit. If we sow the wind we have to reap the whirlwind.

Ever since the Interim Government took charge of affairs they have been intensely occupied with these communal troubles. The House will remember that this Government took office very soon after what is called the great Calcutta killing which began on the 16th August. All our work was shadowed by these events and we tried our utmost to deal with this situation. The House knows that the Government of India may not interfere, under the existing constitution, with provincial autonomy. In so far as anyone can interfere under the constitution, it is the Governor-General and not the Governor-General-in-Council. Nevertheless, as Indians in responsible position to whom the country looked for guidance, we tried our utmost to help. Throughout this unhappy

[1] 14 November 1946. *Legislative Assembly Debates, Official Report,* Vol. VIII, 1946, 12 November 1946–18 November 1946, pp. 1052–5. SWJN, Vol. 1 (II Series), pp. 88–90.

period, whether it was in Calcutta or elsewhere in India, or Noakhali and East Bengal, or Bihar, the Governments were actuely conscious of their responsibilities and keenly desirous of combating the peril that had encompassed the country. There has been much public criticism of our seeming inaction because necessarily we could not function in public in regard to these matters. If facts were known, I do not think that this criticism would be considered to be justified.

A succession of events, which are known to this House, led to the great Calcutta killing. That was followed by the great tragedy of Noakhali and East Bengal, and that again led to the terrible happenings in Bihar. And now Bihar is leading to other outbursts of brutality and violence. There appears to be a competition in murder and brutality, and unless we put a stop to this, the immediate future of our country is dark. That it can be put a stop to, I have little doubt. Not by a reliance on mere armed force, though that may be necessary occasionally, but by the efforts of all those who influence public opinion, can we put an end to this horror which comes in the way of all political and social progress, and indeed which is already making life a burden for many of us. It must be clearly accepted that we cannot settle any problem by the methods of hatred and violence.

Recently I have come into intimate contact with masses of people in Bihar and I saw the horrors that a simple and likable peasantry can perpetrate when it loses all balance and sanity. I found that during the Calcutta killing a large number of Biharis had lost their lives. Their relatives had returned to Bihar together with many other refugees and had spread out all over the rural areas carrying stories of what had happened in Calcutta. The people of Bihar were stirred profoundly. Then came news of Noakhali and East Bengal. These stories, and more especially the accounts of abduction and rape of women and forcible conversion of large numbers of people, infuriated the populace. For some time they looked to the Central Government and hoped that this would give them relief and afford protection. When they did not see any such help or protection forthcoming, they grew bitter and criticized strongly the Interim Government for its apparent inactivity.

Various incidents occurred in Bihar which added to the general excitement. Towards the end of October there was trouble in Chapra district and in Bhagalpur city. This was soon suppressed. Then came, on the 31st October, trouble on a big scale in Patna district, overflowing into Gaya and Monghyr districts. It was in essence a mass uprising, large numbers of peasants burning and killing mercilessly. As always happens on such occasions, criminal and anti-social elements took part and even took the lead in certain areas. One of the difficulties of the situation was that the areas could not be easily reached because of lack of communications and flooded conditions.

This mass uprising lasted almost exactly one week. Just as it started suddenly, it ended almost equally suddenly. This rapid ending of a wide-spread

movement, which was on the verge of spreading to other districts, was remarkable. The military, of course, came in at a somewhat later stage and helped in restoring order. But a much more powerful factor in this restoration of order was the effort of a large number of persons, chiefly Biharis, who spread out all over the villages and came face to face with the peasant masses. The news of Mahatma Gandhi's proposed fast also had a powerful effect.[2]

Grossly exaggerated accounts have appeared of the number of casualties during these troubles caused both by infuriated mobs and by military firing. It is difficult to give at present even approximately accurate figures of casualties. But it can be said with certainty that some of the figures appearing in newspapers are completely wrong. They are usually based on accounts of panic-stricken refugees who had lost all balance or judgement.

The Bihar situation was brought completely under control after a week and is quiet now. Evidence of a return to normality is the desire of people to return to their villages. The great problem there now is how to rehabilitate these people. The Bihar Government have undertaken responsibility to lodge, feed and provide other necessaries including medical relief to the evacuees. I understand that they also propose to give financial assistance to the sufferers in order to help rehabilitation.

As I have stated, the news from and about Noakhali created a very profound feeling in Bihar and the rest of India. I am not in a position to say much about present conditions in East Bengal. But recent reports from reliable witnesses have drawn particular attention to the vital problem of restoring women who were abducted and forcibly converted. This problem is not only important in itself but also because of its all-India repercussions. It is, therefore, urgently necessary that every possible step should be taken with all possible speed to restore them to their people. Only then can beginnings be made of rehabilitation in East Bengal.

[2] In Bengal and Bihar the news of Mahatma Gandhi's proposed fast and the appeals of Nehru and Rajendra Prasad to save Mahatma Gandhi's life and make amends for the outrages committed improved the situation.

10

Politics and Communalism in Punjab[1]

The situation in the Punjab is more or less under control. I propose to say little about my Punjab visit at this time. I have seen ghastly sights and I have heard of behaviour by human beings which would degrade even the brute. The first thing to be done is to put an end to every kind of disorderly action. The second thing is to protect and rescue the people who may be threatened or are in danger; more specially the women, who have been abducted or removed by force, must be brought back to their own homes. Then other problems like the care of refugees and rehabilitation have to be tackled.

I think that the present disturbances will be completely ended within a very few days. So far as I have been able to see, the military are acting efficiently and with rapidity.

There is never any need for panic for whatever has happened, much less today when the situation is more or less under control. The man who is panicky is a useless citizen and a danger to others.

Obviously all that has happened is intimately connected with political affairs. I prefer to say nothing about that aspect except this: if political affairs are to be conducted in this way then they cease to be political affairs and become some kind of a jungle warfare which reduces human habitation to the state of a desert. If there is any grain of intelligence in a person, he must realize that whatever the political objective he may aim at, this is not the way to attain it. Any such attempt must bring, as it has in a measure brought, ruin and destruction in its train. Let people struggle for their political aim if they want to. But they can do so as human beings with a measure of human dignity.

I am not enamoured of slogans anywhere. The Punjab is specially fond of slogans. There may be times when slogans are useful and good but when we are up against these hard facts which we face today, these slogans cease to have any meaning. In particular slogans cursing and denouncing others are peculiarly unbecoming and objectionable. Slogans with *murdabad* attached to them are not brave slogans but indicate the mentality of a coward or a bully.

[1] Statement at a press conference in Lahore on 17 March 1947 on the conclusion of his tour of the Punjab. From the *The Hindustan Times* and *Tribune* of 18 March 1947. Excerpts.

India will go along this path to her destined end of independence and nothing that has happened is going to stop this. So, I am sure, will the Punjab as a part of India, in spite of everything that has happened, or is likely to happen. Mighty historic forces are at work driving us all in that direction in spite of our own follies. It is up to us, however, to march ahead with dignity and with head erect or crawl like animals in the field.

11

Cow Slaughter[1]

New Delhi, 7 August 1947

My dear Rajendra Babu,

. . . Nobody can possibly doubt the widespread Hindu sentiment in favour of cow protection. At the same time there is something slightly spurious about the present agitation. . . .[2]

The fact, however, remains that there is very strong Hindu feeling in this matter. There is also the additional fact that for economic reasons certain steps must be taken for stopping the slaughter of milch cows and of trying to improve the breed and condition of cattle.

This question should in any event be considered in its larger context of general planning. It is possible to take some preliminary measures even before any larger scheme is passed. But I think that it is quite out of the question for us to talk about stopping cow slaughter generally without the fullest examination of its political and economic effects. I am convinced that if we did so suddenly it would result in great injury to cattle in India. Our better breeds will be swamped out of existence and there would be a general degradation. . . .

I do not think we can ignore the political aspect. India, in spite of its overwhelming Hindu population, is a composite country from the religious and other points of view. It is a vital problem for us to solve as to whether we are to function fundamentally in regard to our general policy as such a composite country, or to function as a Hindu country rather ignoring the viewpoints of other groups. It is inevitable that the majority Hindu sentiment will affect our activities in a hundred ways. Nevertheless it does make a difference whether we try to think of India as a composite country or as a Hindu country. It should be remembered that the stoppage of cow slaughter means stopping non-Hindus from doing something which they might do. For economic reasons steps can always be taken because they are justified on economic grounds. But if any such step is taken purely on grounds of Hindu sentiment, it means that

[1] To Rajendra Prasad, JN Papers, NMML. Excerpts.

[2] Both Rajender Prasad and Jawaharlal Nehru had received a large number of telegrams and post cards demanding the ban of cow slaughter.

the governance of India is going to be carried on in a particular way, which thus far we have not done.

This question, therefore, raises rather vital issues in regard to our approach to almost all our problems. As you know, there is a very strong Hindu revivalist feeling in the country at the present moment. I am greatly distressed by it because it represents the narrowest communalism. It is the exact replica of the narrow Muslim communalism which we have tried to combat for so long. I fear that this narrow sectarian outlook will do grave injury not only to nationalism as such but also to the high ideals for which Indian and Hindu culture has stood through the ages. We are facing a crisis of the spirit in India today and a false step may have far-reaching consequences.

I have felt often enough during the past few weeks, and have stated as much at our party meetings in the Constituent Assembly and elsewhere, that I find myself in total disagreement with this revivalist feeling, and in view of this difference of opinion I am a poor representative of many of our people today. I felt honestly that it might be better for a truer representative to take my place. That would do away with the unnaturalness and artificiality of the present position.

These general considerations are very important and will have to be decided by us or others. On that decision depends our entire future policy, domestic, national and international.

Yours sincerely
Jawaharlal Nehru

12

Partition Riots[1]

During the last three weeks, I have wandered about the Punjab-—West and East Punjab—and my mind has been filled with the horror of the things which I saw and heard. During the last few days in the Punjab and in Delhi[2] I have supped my fill of horror. That, indeed, is the only feast that we can now have. And yet, however horrible the events that we may see, we have to face them and we have to prepare for them and we have to conquer them. And so we set about building up an organization which can meet all these great difficulties that we have to face. We have gone a good long way to building that organization.

Our first objective was to remove to safety all those of our people who looked towards us in the West Punjab. We thought of our people in the various districts there, in Lyallpur, in Montgomery, in Rawalpindi, in Jhelum, in Multan, in Gujranwala, in Sialkot, in Jhung, in Sheikhupura, in Gujrat and other places. We made our preparations to remove them as rapidly and as safely as possible by air, train, motor transport and by road. We also built up great camps for the refugees who came to East Punjab and elsewhere. We also tried to facilitate the evacuation of those who wanted to leave the East Punjab for the West. We did all this and we were succeeding in a large measure. The exchange of populations, forced on us by circumstances, was proceeding fairly rapidly. And then other events took place. This trouble spread to some of the southern districts of East Punjab and it spread to Delhi. Here, while I speak to you, Delhi is none too pleasant a place to live in.

What were the consequences of the spreading of this trouble? It was this, that many of the arrangements that we had made for the rapid evacuation of our people from the West Punjab were delayed because, naturally, we have to turn to making other arrangements for other districts in the East Punjab and

[1] National Broadcast, 9 September 1947, AIR tapes, NMML. Excerpts.

[2] Riots had broken out in Delhi on 4 September 1947 with the arrival of over 20,00,00 refugees from the Punjab. The reports of their sufferings stirred up feelings against those Muslims who still remained in the city and caused disturbances for four days from 7 September during which nearly two thousand people died. A military force of 5000 men patrolled the streets day and night and restored order with the assistance of Mahatma Gandhi, who arrived from Calcutta on 9 September.

in Delhi. Those people who thought that they were doing something to force the pace of our work, if I may say so, actually delayed and hindered the very thing they wanted done.

It is an extraordinary thing that I have seen. I have seen horror enough and I have seen many people die. People will die of course, as they must some time or other. Death is bad and death is painful, but one gets used to death. But there are some things much worse than death that have taken place. I am ashamed of the acts that my people have done and I fear that the disgrace and the consequences of evil deeds will remain with us for a long time, for evil does not end by evil and you cannot by murder put an end to murder. And yet, somehow, many of our people have thought thus, and a maddened populace, influenced, day after day, by stories of terrible events, has gone completely mad and has behaved as only mad people do.

How are we to face this situation? It is absolutely no good to be just sorry for it or bemoan our lot. Let us first realize what the situation is. It is a very serious crisis, not only because of the disorder that prevails, but, even more so, it is a crisis in the soul and spirit of India. Is this the realization of our dreams of the free India that we aimed at all these long years? If this is something wrong, and everyone must admit that it is wrong, then we must fight this evil with all our might, and we must convince our people that they are utterly wrong, even wrong from the narrowest viewpoint which they might have, even wrong from the point of view of retaliation. For, even though retaliation is bad, this is not even retaliation. It is something which comes in the way of effective action of helping our own people, and, of course, it disgraces us not only before the world, but in our own hearts, and that is a disgrace which takes a long time to overcome.

It is a very serious crisis and it will take time for us to overcome. When I say it is a serious crisis, I am not speaking just in military terms, for I have little doubt that in a military or a police sense we shall overcome it soon. Indeed, the military have the control and will gain more control very soon. Of that I have little doubt. But, surely we are not going to live in India just with the help of the military, without any self-restraint and desist from evil deeds just because of the fear of the consequences of what the military or police might do to us. Therefore, I say, it is a serious crisis. What kind of India do we aim at? Are we building that or are we doing something which will destroy it?

So, the first thing to decide is that we must put an end to this bad business that is going on. We must have peace and law and order established. We must rescue our people from West Punjab. We must cooperate in the process of exchange of populations wherever that is necessary. But this business of disturbing the peace and of killing and of arson comes in the way of our cooperating and carrying out the very steps that these people desire. So, I want you to consider this matter in all its seriousness, to consider where we are going, what kind of

India we are going to leave to our children to live in. If this kind of thing continues, and if you are convinced, as I am, that this bad phase must be ended, then we must set about it with all the firmness at our command. There can be no softness about it. No gentleness is possible in dealing with evil. We have to grapple with it with strength and firmness, and even occasionally, if I may say so, with bad consequences to the people. I did not wish to use the word cruelty; but even cruelty, if I may say so, an occasional cruelty may be the gentlest option in the long run. There has been cruelty enough and callousness and if we allow them to continue, they will spread, and destroy our people and our hopes.

Therefore, I do appeal to you all to consider this matter and to come out in the open and help. For we do not want to deal with this problem purely in the military sense. We want all people of goodwill and good intentions and all of those who have any hopes of seeing a free and prosperous India. I want them to come out and to help us. I want them to become messengers of good tidings and to stop this evil not only in this city of Delhi but all over the surrounding districts and in East Punjab, realizing that by so doing they will not only help those of our people who are in distress, in West Punjab, in peril and in danger of their lives, but will also be building what we have sought to build for so long.

13

Muslim Population in India[1]

The disturbances in West and East Punjab have led to vast migrations across the border and an exchange of population is going on. This might be said to have been spontaneous, or under the stress of circumstances. Although exchange of population was occasionally mentioned during the past few months as a possible consequence of Pakistan, few people took it seriously and most of us criticized it as totally impracticable. Even after the disturbances began in the Punjab, we did not definitely encourage such an exchange, though we made arrangements for the removal of evacuees in danger of their lives. These arrangements developed till they became, in effect, arrangements for an exchange of population on a large scale. . . .

The Delhi disturbances[2] have raised a novel aspect of this problem and we have now to consider it not merely in relation to the Punjab or the Frontier, etc., but in its all-India context. We have indeed to think out carefully the exact policy we should pursue in future on this vital point so that the steps we may take in the present may not come in the way of our general policy. . . . We cannot be slaves of circumstances, as we have been to some extent during the past few weeks, being driven hither and thither by forces utterly beyond our control. We cannot ignore public opinion, of course, especially when there is strong feeling behind it. At the same time it would be dangerous for us to encourage any policies which might be based on emotional upheaval which exists today. That upheaval will die down to a large extent and then we shall have to face the consequences of any wrong policy that we might adopt. We have to think in terms of the future of India, what kind of India we envisage and hope to build, what its relations are going to be with Pakistan as well as the rest of the world. It is perhaps not necessary or desirable to come to final and concrete decisions immediately. Any attempt to do so might lead us into wrong decisions, because of the prevailing sentiment. Nevertheless, some temporary decisions have to be taken to guide our present policy.

The disturbances in Delhi have brought the wider issue before us in all its grimness. The secession of certain parts of India and the formation of Pakistan

[1] Note to Cabinet Ministers, 12 September 1947. JN Papers, NMML.

[2] See arte fn 2, p. 161.

has left India very predominantly non-Muslim, though it has still a considerable Muslim population. We have guaranteed in the constitution we are making the fullest rights to all minorities.[3] That is common ground. It is clear, however, that the part that Muslims have played in India has been very greatly reduced by the establishment of Pakistan. Such part as they can play can only be a cooperative part, and not one by compulsion which the great majority will never tolerate. There has been this element of compulsion in the past or threats, and this has led to the present unhappy situation and anger between the various communities.

Are we to aim at or to encourage trends which will lead to the progressive elimination of the Muslim population from India, or are we to consolidate, make secure and absorb as full citizens the Muslims who remain in India? That, again, involves our conception of India; is it going to be, as it has been in a large measure, a kind of composite state where there is complete cultural freedom for various groups, but at the same time a strong political unity, or do we wish to make it, as certain elements appear to desire, definitely a Hindu or a non-Muslim state? If the Hindus think in terms of any domination, cultural or otherwise, over others, this would not only be against our own repeated professions, but would naturally displease other and smaller minorities in India. The Hindu mind has felt during the past many years that it has been obstructed by Muslim activities, political and cultural, and, therefore, not allowed full play. Now it is obvious that there can be no such obstruction in future, both because of the numerical preponderance of the Hindus as well as many other reasons. The point is whether the same free play and open opportunities should be given to other groups and communities, who may in the past have misbehaved politically or otherwise, but who are not now in a position to obstruct effectively or make a vital difference to the general trend in India.

The whole history of India has been one of assimilation and synthesis. That has been both the strength and the weakness of India. The Muslim League movement of separatism was a throwback and a contradiction of India's history. The establishment of Pakistan is a further contradiction and, perhaps, many of the troubles we are facing today are due essentially to this attempt to go against the main trends of India's history. What this will lead to ultimately it is difficult to prophesy. Already the results have been disastrous. It is a dynamic situation and can either move to further conflict, including even war between India and Pakistan, or real peace between them and an adjustment. The latter may lead to a closer union, though this seems hardly conceivable in

[3] Abolition of separate electorates and elections on the basis of joint electorates, reservation of seats for the different recognized minorities on the basis of their population, safeguards and non-justiciable principles to the fundamental rights were the guarantees embodied in the constitution. The Congress Working Committee issued a statement on 24 September 1947 assuring the implementation of these promises.

the present temper of the people both in India and Pakistan. A middle static way hardly seems possible.

However, these are more distant considerations. For the present, let us take Delhi as symbolic of the past, the present and the future. Delhi has been a great seat of the common culture that grew up during these past two hundred years in India. It has been, more than any other city in India, the seat of Indo-Muslim culture. It has had a large population, about 45 per cent of its total, of Muslims. To some extent, inevitably because of the establishment of Pakistan there will be a drift of Muslims to the Pakistan area from Delhi. Nevertheless, normally speaking, two hundred thousand or more of Muslims would still remain in Delhi. Are we to encourage them to remain in Delhi, or think in terms of most of them going away to Pakistan? If the latter, then why stop at Delhi?—other nearby cities are affected also—Aligarh, Meerut, Moradabad, Saharanpur, Shahjahanpur, Bulandshahr, etc. And if these cities are dealt with in this way, or are affected, then why stop there? Gradually the whole of India functions in this way and progressively eliminates the Muslim population. This process of elimination begins more at the top, so that the higher cultural strata goes first.

If this process continues, it will mean not only enormous changes taking place all the time in India with some kind of conflict going on, but also our being unable to do anything else for years. Meanwhile, the economic situation will certainly overwhelm us.

It seems to me clear, therefore, that we cannot encourage this business of Muslims leaving India. Apart from other reasons, Pakistan, as it is today, cannot accommodate all the Muslims in India. New difficulties will arise, new conflicts, possibly war. But apart from these political and economic difficulties, I feel convinced that culturally India will be the poorer by any such divorce and all wrong tendencies will hold the field then.

14

Fascism—The New Wave[1]

The wave of fascism which is gripping India now is the direct outcome of hatred for the non-Muslims which the Muslim League preached among its followers for years. The League accepted the ideology of fascism from the Nazis of Germany. I recall how, immediately after my return from Europe in 1938, I found in the League a distinct influence of European dictators. The ideas and methods of fascist organizations are now gaining popularity among the Hindus also and the demand for the establishment of a Hindu state is its clear manifestation.

If Muslims prove traitors to this country, then India has every right to punish them, but it is not possible to force them to migrate to any other country. There are Hindus, too, who have acted treacherously towards India. To which country can they be asked to migrate? The demand for sending away all the Muslims from India and the lawlessness prevailing at present is proving a great help to reactionary elements who are gradually gaining a foothold in the social and political life of the people. This is a serious menace and it is the duty of every honest Congress worker to fight it.

At the United Nations, India protested against the order of the South African Government banning Indians from entering certain areas, but now our whole case will collapse if we in our own country put restrictions on loyal Muslims.

The Congressmen of today are frittering away their energies in petty squabbles and are not doing much by way of honest constructive work. The confidence which the Congress enjoys among the masses is the fruit of sacrifices of the past and it is being shaken by the way real work among them is being neglected by Congressmen. Public memory is short and you cannot depend upon the reserves of popularity for very long.

[1] Address to Congress workers and students in Delhi, 3 October 1947. From *The Hindu*, 5 October 1947. Excerpts.

15

Aftermath of Gandhi's Assassination[1]

New Delhi, 5 February 1948

My dear Premier,

When I wrote to you last, Gandhiji was in the middle of his fast. A little more than two weeks have elapsed since then, and yet it seems as if it was distant ages ago, for so much has happened and all of us have experienced shock and unutterable pain. The suddenness and magnitude of what has happened[2] benumbed us for a while, and yet we felt immediately that we have to take action and swift action.

You are already aware of some action that we have taken. You must have seen the resolutions, issued by the Government of India, on this tragedy and know that we have banned the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh organization. Investigations are proceeding. But enough has come to light already to show that this assassination was not the act of just an individual or even a small group. It is clear that behind him lay a fairly widespread organization and deliberate propaganda of hate and violence carried on for a long time. It is significant that for the first time after a long period we should have political assassination in India and that too on the highest level. Even apart from Gandhiji's death by such assassination, the fact that there are people in this country who have adopted this method to gain political ends is of the gravest import. Perhaps, we have been too lenient in dealing with these various elements in the country. We have suffered for that. But it is time that we gripped the problem fully and dealt with it adequately. There can be no half-measures.

It would appear that a deliberate *coup d'etat* was planned involving the killing of several persons and the promotion of general disorder to enable the particular group concerned to seize power. The conspiracy appears to have been a fairly widespread one, spreading to some of the states. It is not proper for me now to say much more about this except to warn you of its widespread ramifications.

I am and have been a believer in civil liberty and the democratic processes, but it is absurd to talk of democracy when the very basis of it is challenged by terroristic activities; it is equally absurd for civil liberty to be granted to those who wish to seize power by murder and violence. Therefore we are compelled

[1] To Chief Ministers, SWJN, Vol. 5 (II series), pp. 312–16. Excerpts.

[2] Mahatma Gandhi was shot dead by Nathuram Godse on 30 January 1948.

to take action to restrict certain liberties of groups and individuals in order that the people generally should not be deprived of all liberty. I will suggest to you, therefore, to take every possible step to meet this grave situation and to root out the evil that confronts us. We must remember that the people opposed to us are thoroughly unscrupulous. They will say one thing and do another. I have had messages of condolence from some persons of note who are believed to be associated in this conspiracy. I cannot, therefore, just take any person's word for granted. It is fairly well known that attempts have been made, and these have met with some success, in having cells of these conspirators in all manner of governmental places, services, etc. We shall have to purge these and purify our administration and services.

The popular reaction to the murder is understandable.[3] It was scandalous in the extreme that any person in India should have the temerity and the meanness to celebrate by distribution of sweets or by slogans the assassination of Gandhiji. If the mass of the people resented this and took action of their own accord I can understand it and even appreciate it to some extent. But it is clear that any widespread disorder plays into the hands of our enemies and weakens such action as Government might take and are taking. Unfortunately some people have encouraged this disorder and rather exploited it for particular purposes. While one can understand spontaneous action for a while, one cannot appreciate the exploitation of this sentiment. This kind of thing can only lead to civil strife on a large scale and a confusion of issues. We have many currents and cross-currents agitating the stream of Indian life today. The ending of British rule released many forces and we saw the terrible Punjab disaster. Some of these forces gathered strength exploiting that disaster and they have now done this evil deed. The death of Mahatma Gandhi, who was the tremendous cementing force of India, has again weakened our political and social fabric. At this moment the first essential is that we must hold together and subordinate our minor differences in order to face the common peril. . . .

Gandhiji has gone and now it becomes more evident than ever what a tremendous stabilizing influence he has been in all our problems. We have the mounting economic difficulty—falling production, rising prices and a general disequilibrium. We have strikes and lockouts, we have communalism which hides itself under the cloak of nationalism. We have the Indian States. There has been rapid movement and change in the States and schemes of merger have been put through in regard to many of the minor States.[4] Hyderabad remains a problem, not only in regard to its relations with India but also because of its

[3] There had been attacks on known supporters of the Hindu Mahasabha, burning of their houses and shops and also attacks on Mahasabha offices.

[4] Thirteen Deccan States, including Sangli and Miraj, agreed to merge with the Bombay province. The rulers of Bundelkhand in Central India proposed to form a United State of Bundelkhand, and 449 territorial units in Kathiawar decided to merge into a United State of Kathiawar.

internal set-up. It is an extraordinary combination of medieval autocracy and rabid communalism right in the heart of the country. It is patent that it cannot continue in this fashion. Trouble has occurred on the borders of Hyderabad and there has been some excitement about this. We have naturally to be prepared for all consequences. But there is no reason why we should grow excited over petty border troubles and disputes. We must see things in proper perspective or else our picture will be wrong. Violent action in the political field always precipitates a situation which otherwise might take time to come to a head. So the assassination of Gandhiji has accelerated many changes. There is tense anxiety as to what might happen next. In this state of affairs the heads of Governments and their colleagues must keep cool and at the same time vigilant. They must take action rapidly and they must not allow any complacency to delay action. The army above all has to play an important role when violence is threatened. We know that many attempts have been made to tamper with the army but we also know that the army has withstood these attempts and is a magnificent force, disciplined and loyal to the Government.

There is a strong opinion in the country, with which I sympathize, that no political-religious organization or rather no organization confined to a particular religious group and aiming at political ends should be allowed to function. We have suffered enough from this type of communalism whether it is Muslim or Hindu or Sikh. This matter will have to be considered carefully. I do not want, of course, to suppress any legitimate political activity. But the combination of political activity with a religious group is a dangerous one as we know from experience. You will have to give thought to this matter as to what should be done.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

16

Pakistan and the Indian States[1]

New Delhi, 9 July 1948

My dear Nawab Saheb,

Thank you for your letter of 1st July.[2] I am glad you have written frankly and fully. I appreciate your confidence and I think I owe it to you to write equally frankly.

Do you remember some of the talks[3] we had more than a year ago? I was anxious then to point out to you that India was passing through a dynamic phase of her existence and that unless this was understood any arrangement that might be made would be superficial and would not last. I have a sense of history, and however much I may fail in an appreciation of the moment, I have also some sense of historical forces at play. In India I could see these forces at work, for good or for ill, and nothing surprised me so much as the static view which rulers of Indian States took of the situation then. They talked without appreciating the reality of the situation. It was not a question of what I wanted or what they wanted, but of understanding something which was bound to happen whether we wanted it or not. All we could do was to see that the changes that were inevitable took place in as reasonable and amicable a way as possible.

And yet, the talks we had either privately or in the Negotiating Committee ignored this vital aspect. Did you or did any of your brother princes realize that in the course of a year or so the whole structure of the Indian States system would inevitably collapse at the impact of the new forces that were rising in India? The change in India in regard to the States seems sudden and so it is in a way. And yet, looking at it from another point of view, it is a long-delayed change which would have taken place many years ago. Changes delayed have a way of coming unannounced and often in a wrong way, and when they come they upset many things.

Today there is an increasing conflict between India and Hyderabad State. Forgetting for the moment the minor aspects of this conflict, can anyone

[1] To the Nawab of Bhopal, JN Papers, NMML.

[2] After a brief discussion with Nehru on 27 May 1948, the Nawab wrote a long letter.

[3] For Jawaharlal Nehru's notes on the discussions on 20 and 21 April 1946 see SWJN, Vol. 15, pp. 337–50.

doubt, for an instant, that the attitude taken up by the Nizam and his advisers can only end in the ruin of the State as it is and of the Nizam's dynasty. For obvious reasons we have tried to avoid this because any such contingency would bring great suffering to large numbers of people. We went to the utmost limits to meet the Nizam's wishes. We have not succeeded in it and the forces of history move on to bring about the inevitable culmination of all this. To any observer it is clear what the result will be, whatever the intermediate stages might be. All this comes from littleness of mind and lack of understanding of the new forces that are shaping India and the world.

It has been our misfortune, and the misfortune of India and Pakistan, that evil impulses were encouraged by people who ought to have known better and for the moment those evil impulses triumphed. You know that I have spent the greater part of my adult life in pursuing and trying to realize certain ideals I had. Only a part of those ideals have been realized and even that realization has come in a way which has all but shattered me. Can you imagine the sorrow that confronts me when I see after more than thirty years of incessant effort the failure of much that I longed for passionately? Can you realize how I felt during these past years how utterly evil tendencies were set in motion by Mr. Jinnah and the Muslim League, tendencies which I know could only bring disaster to India? They did bring disaster not only to India but even more so to the Pakistan of Mr. Jinnah's creation. That disaster has not ended yet, and no man can say whether and how that will end.

I am not foolish enough to say that all the blame lies on one side and that the other is blameless. I know that we have been to blame in many matters, but I do feel that fundamentally we were looking in the right direction and trying to act rightly even though we did not always succeed. Indeed so long as Gandhiji was alive he would not permit us to stray far. Nevertheless certain forces of evil were too strong for us and the poison that Mr. Jinnah instilled into India's public life spread in all directions.

Partition came and we accepted it because we thought that perhaps that way, however painful it was, we might have some peace to work along our own lines. Perhaps we acted wrongly. It is difficult to judge now. And yet, the consequences of that partition have been so terrible that one is inclined to think that anything else would have been preferable. That partition has come, and it brought in its train other vast changes. There can be no going back now to India as it was before the partition. Organic changes have taken place in India which prevent that going back.

Nevertheless, all my sense of history rebels against this unnatural state of affairs that has been created in India and Pakistan. I cannot see it continuing for long as it is. Something that was inherently wrong and unnatural was done and it brought disastrous consequences in its train. There is no settling down to it and conflicts continue. Perhaps these conflicts are due to the folly or littleness of those in authority in India or Pakistan. I feel, however, that it is

something deeper than that and not all the wisdom of statesmen could end these conflicts in the present context because they are inherent in the situation. Ultimately I have no doubt that India and Pakistan will come close together and it may be that there is some kind of federal link between them or at any rate certain common subjects. There is no other way to peace. The alternative is an ever-deteriorating situation and incessant conflict. For the present the former seems far off and the atmosphere of possible war thickens.

It is with this background that we have to understand the present situation. No sensible person, I take it, desires war or civil strife. But the very birth of Pakistan and its background was such that till it was worked out somehow, the evil that had pursued us would not settle down. You mention the plan you had in your mind for the formation of a third independent state[4] which would serve as a balance between the two. As a matter of fact this idea went completely against the forces of history that were working so powerfully in India. It just could not have happened and could only have led to further strife instead of the stability that you were aiming at.

For my part I have not given up in the slightest the ideals which have moved me during all these past years, though I must confess to my sorrow that I find myself increasingly unable to live up to them. I believe in India being a secular state with complete freedom for all religions and cultures and for cooperation between them. I believe that India can only become great if she preserves that composite culture which she had developed through the ages. I confess however that doubts sometimes assail me whether this is going to happen or not. And yet at the back of my mind I feel sure that whatever might happen in the present, sometime or other, India will have to tread that path to self-realization and greatness. I am anxious therefore that the Muslims in India as well as all other religious groups should have the fullest freedom and opportunity to develop themselves.[5] I am entirely hostile to Hindu or any other communalism in India.

But you will appreciate that the history of the past few years, and more especially of the last year, has increased communal suspicion and bitterness. Is it surprising that those Muslims, who till yesterday were champions of Pakistan, should be viewed with suspicion when they talk of loyalty to India? It is a little absurd of some of our people to speak incessantly about demanding loyalty from the Muslims[6] or any others. Loyalty does not come by compulsion.

[4] The Nawab mentioned that he and certain other rulers had conceived a plan for the formation of a "Third Independent State", which would serve as a curb on the emergence of a "dangerously unstable constitutional structure" and as "a non-communal intermediary between two communally divided states of India and Pakistan."

[5] The Nawab said that he was still a strong supporter of Nehru's ideal of developing a composite culture in India.

[6] The Nawab wrote: "There have been demands for guarantees from Muslims of India of loyalty to India, but loyalty in its true sense cannot be demanded of any individual, it must be earned and inspired as a genuine sentiment springing from the heart."

I have little doubt that the Muslims in India have undergone a big sea change as soon as the partition came and after they have seen the consequences of this partition. I feel that this process will continue and I want to encourage it. Nevertheless the fact remains that in the present context the sympathy of many of them may well lie with Pakistan and they cannot get out of the habit of mind which they had developed during these past few years. If that is so, then a certain inherent and potential conflict continues and frank cooperation as between colleagues and comrades is difficult.

I know very well that there is a painful tussle of the spirit going on among the Muslims in India. To some extent all of us have this conflict within ourselves, but the Muslims in India have it in a peculiar degree. Of course they have been uprooted in mind from certain conceptions that they had held. They still stick to them because it takes time to get out of the old grooves, and at the same time they know that these old grooves are not good any longer. Certainly I wish to help them to get out of the old grooves and to become again parts of the new India. There are many elements among the Hindus who have no such desire and who would rather do without the Muslims. I think that would be a fatal disaster from the point of view of India and I wish therefore to resist it. Whatever some Hindus may think, ultimately the future of the Muslims in India will depend upon themselves. I have no doubt that they can make good if they are clear enough and brave enough about it.

There need be no question about the Government of India giving to Muslims their full rights of citizenship of India.[7] It is true that theoretical pronouncements do not go far unless they are accompanied by tangible results. We can work for these results, but the real results come not from governmental pronouncements or even action, but rather from the general atmosphere that prevails.

One of the biggest obstacles to the creation of the atmosphere we seek is the repeated declaration that Pakistan is an Islamic State.[8] That, I think, is an absurdity in the present world, at any rate for any progressive nation. If Pakistan insists on being what is called an Islamic State it will be backward, narrow-minded and unprogressive just as India, if it seeks to be a Hindu State, would be similarly backward and unprogressive. But at any rate, India claims to be something different while Pakistan goes on insisting on an Islamic State. If it is an Islamic State, then inevitably the conception of nationality, as it is understood today, has no meaning and the Muslims in India or most of them may

[7] The Nawab urged Nehru to restore the confidence of Muslims by securing and maintaining for them everywhere in the Dominion their legitimate and reasonable rights as citizens of India.

[8] For example, in a broadcast to the United States in February 1948, Jinnah said, "I am sure the constitution of Pakistan will be of a democratic type embodying the principles of Islam. Today, they are applicable in actual life as they were 1,300 years ago."

well look to Pakistan as their homeland. That leads to disruptive tendencies working continuously and to a continuance of suspicion.

You refer to your possible selection as Governor-General of Pakistan to succeed Mr. Jinnah when he wishes to retire.[9] That again creates an obvious difficulty in the present context at least. What the future will show I do not know. But we have to consider these matters as things are today when the interests of India and Pakistan are opposed to each other and in conflict. When this conflict has been completely removed, many things would happen and present difficulties would not exist. But so long as these difficulties exist, it does seem odd that you, a citizen of India and a ruler of an Indian State, should become the Governor General of Pakistan.

I am convinced that sooner or later India and Pakistan must come close together. I am equally convinced that India will function, because of her resources and her geography, as a nation which ties up many other nations of Asia with herself and with each other. That seems to me an inevitable development. To that end those of us who believe in these ideals can work, even though at present they seem rather far-off objectives. But the present distress will pass and India will then rapidly fulfil her destiny.

I can assure you that I have not at all misunderstood your letter but have appreciated it. I hope you will equally appreciate this reply of mine. It does not, I am afraid, lead definitely to any practical steps at present, but before we take those practical steps we must be clear in our own minds.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

[9] Referring to his possible selection as Governor-General of Pakistan, the Nawab had stated "there can be no question of it as long as Mr. Jinnah is alive, and I would wish him very long life. If . . . I am called upon to serve and if I accept the offer, I shall do so with the thought uppermost in my mind of trying to bring about the closest and happiest relations with India and Pakistan."

17

Separate Provinces for Sikhs[1]

New Delhi, 8 December 1948

My dear Gianiji,

. . . May I say right at the beginning that the time is long passed when any "demand" should be put forward on behalf of a religious community. This savours of far too much of the communal outlook for my liking. Suggestions and proposals might be put forward.

Before I consider any of your points, I should further like to say that such consideration is made very difficult by the attitude taken up by Master Tara Singh. What he may say in private, I do not know, or at any rate I need not attach importance to it. But what he says in his speeches is public property. I have seldom come across more irresponsible and amazing speeches than those delivered by Master Tara Singh. So far as he is concerned, the result of his speeches is to put him completely out of court. No government can deal with anyone who speaks and acts in this manner. We have shown an astonishing degree of latitude to Master Tara Singh because of our earnest desire not to do anything to make more difficult an already difficult situation. The Sikhs have been our colleagues and our comrades in both our successes and our failures. They have suffered in common with others for the cause of India's freedom, and they are justified, as others are, to expect and claim the same rights, privileges, responsibilities and obligations which others may have. Because of the extreme upsets that they have suffered during the past year and a half, we have felt that they should be treated with all gentleness, courtesy and even generosity. Fortunately they are a brave, enterprising and virile community. That is the guarantee, more than any other, that they will continue to play a prominent part in India's future.

It is because of this that we have refrained from doing anything which might be interpreted as a gesture of ill will against the Sikhs. We have no ill will at all and indeed we have a great deal of goodwill. You know that during the past fifteen months or so, the Sikhs have been criticized and condemned in foreign countries. They have been made responsible in the foreign press,

[1] To Kartar Singh. JN Papers, NMML. Excerpts.

notably in the United Kingdom and the USA, for most of the ills that have followed partition. That was not a true charge and we combated it as far as we could. During my recent visit to Europe, I was surprised to find the general opinion held about what the Sikhs did after the partition. I tried to meet it and counter it.

All this has to be borne in mind. However exaggerated the views held by some people, they have been encouraged in holding them because of the attitude of some of the Sikh leaders, notably Master Tara Singh. It has been the misfortune of the Sikhs during the past several years to have had a wrong lead given to them, or no lead at all, and the consequences have been most unfortunate so far as the Sikhs are concerned. I am distressed that in spite of this past experience that wrong lead continues and brings discredit to the good name of the Sikhs. None of us, however big we may be, can ignore world opinion. That world opinion is at present very definitely against the Sikhs not for any particular fault of theirs but because of Master Tara Singh and some others, whose activities bring discredit on that good name. Master Tara Singh has been speaking and acting in a manner which brings to mind all that the Muslim League leaders did before the partition. We have seen the consequences of that. Yet wisdom has not come and if any one of us follows the same wrong path, the consequences must necessarily be bad.

We can consider dispassionately the case of any group or community and endeavour to give justice to it, though even that justice becomes tainted if threats and wild language claim it. But the problem today is not primarily of patching up some kind of a settlement, though that is desirable but of dealing with an astonishingly virulent campaign. I know well that this virulence is not confined to one side. There has been enough of it in the press of both sides and possibly in other activities also. At the same time I have regretfully come to the conclusion that the chief responsibility must rest with Master Tara Singh and all those who support him.

In considering any proposals some basic facts have to be borne in mind. We, as a Government and as Congress and in our individual capacities, are completely committed not to encourage communalism. We are committed to the ending of separate electorates. We are committed to no weightage being granted to any group or community. We do not like reservation of seats, but we have agreed that there might be reservation, if a minority community so desires, provided that reservation is on a population basis.

It is with these basic factors before us that we should consider any question. It is no good at all to ignore these basic factors because they are not going to change.

The question of forming a separate province or of cutting away a part of East Punjab is in a different category. Perhaps you have seen my views about raising such a question at this stage, however desirable it might be on the merits.

But apart from these general considerations, East Punjab happens to be a frontier province and a province which connects Kashmir with the rest of India. In these circumstances and at this stage it would be a mistake of the first magnitude to start linguistic distributions at this critical moment. It would affect not only our struggle in Kashmir but also much more basic and intricate problems. No government, knowing all the facts, could undertake this grave responsibility at this stage.

As for cutting of some districts from East Punjab, that would lead to making a small province even smaller. This is not a basic objection, but in the present context as I have stated above, it would be a grave risk to take, apart from other reasons which I need not go into.

You have quoted something that I had said two-and-a-half years ago.[2] You will appreciate that many things have happened during that two-and-a-half years including the partition and all its fatal consequences. It was one thing to have a Sikh autonomous area in an undivided Punjab. It is a different thing to split small areas now and make them weaker in many ways. It may be that in the future the problem of provincial redistribution might be considered fully in all its aspects. But the time does not appear to be yet. This of course does not and cannot mean that the Sikhs should not have every facility and opportunity for their cultural freedom and growth.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

[2] See SWJN, Vol. 15, pp. 257–9 and 280–1.

18

The Akali Demand[1]

New Delhi, 15 February 1949

My dear Baldev Singh,

I am not surprised that you are worried over the situation that has been created by the proposed Akali Dal Conference in Delhi. As you know, this matter has caused us great concern and, as you mention, I have repeatedly spoken to you about it. I avoided making public reference to the violent campaign that has been waged by certain Akali leaders because I did not wish to enter into an unseemly argument or to do anything which might worsen a bad situation. Obviously, however, we as a Government have to watch carefully every such situation which might give rise to trouble and to take necessary steps to avoid that trouble.

I must confess that I have been continuously surprised at the nature of this agitation as well as the nature of some of the demands put forward. You know that our feelings in regard to the Sikhs generally are of the most friendly character and we want them to play an important part in the life of the nation. Indeed they have played such a part and they will undoubtedly continue playing that part unless unfortunately there is conflict which is likely to injure their cause greatly. In a democratic society changes are sought for and made by peaceful methods and recourse to violence in speech or action is not only completely out of place but is dangerous to all concerned. I have found a continuous appeal to violence and this has made even the consideration of the subject more and more difficult and has roused bitter feelings among many people. As a Government we must avoid any such feelings or any partiality and must view every problem objectively and take into consideration the legitimate interests of all parties concerned.

The nature of the demands made on behalf of some of the Akalis has been two-fold. Some of these demands are obviously opposed to the basic principles laid down by the Constituent Assembly and the Government in regard to communalism. It is clear that we cannot go behind these basic principles without doing violence to all that has happened thus far and without learning from our bitter experience of the past. This point was brought out by the

[1] To Baldev Singh, JN Papers, NMML. Excerpts.

meeting of the Minority Sub-Committee. Another group of suggestions made are of a different nature which have to be considered on merits. These are chiefly provincial in character and some of them are in the nature of conventions which might grow up. Any convention that is agreed to by the parties concerned, and which is not opposed to a basic principle, can be adopted. These matters have to be considered in a peaceful and cooperative atmosphere and not under threats of violence. It must be remembered that if we once depart from strict impartiality, it means robbing somebody else and naturally this does not solve any problem as the past has shown us. Each individual and each group or community must have full justice done to it without infringing on the rights of others, or else a new problem arises. If this background is accepted then it is easy to find a solution to our problems.

The Sikhs are far advanced and a well-knit community who have played an important role in national affairs, more especially in the Punjab, and have gained the respect of others because of their discipline and enterprising spirit. There can be little doubt that in the future they have a great field for advance and the part they will play in the building up of free India will be a notable one. But unfortunately, there has often been a tendency on the part of some of them, happily not all, to try to isolate themselves by special demands and other means from the rest of the community. That seems to me peculiarly an unwise procedure because while attempting to gain some petty advantage they risk the far bigger position that they could hold in cooperation with others. As you know there has grown much bitterness in East Punjab and certain barriers seem to be rising between the Sikhs and others. There is a lack of confidence in each other which leads to less and less cooperation and more and more narrow-mindedness. That is bad for the nation. But it is even worse for a community relatively small in numbers, however well-knit it might be. It is this basic outlook that has to be considered by all of us to whatever group or community we might belong. India is forging ahead in many ways externally and internally and as India goes ahead, all the people of India and all the communities also go ahead. If there is internal conflict, however, even petty gains by one community at the expense of another do not make much difference.

I would, therefore, very strongly advise our Sikh friends to consider this matter on this broader viewpoint which essentially is based on self-interest. Any other approach is bound to be harmful.

The proposed Akali Dal Conference in Delhi[2] has been heralded by widespread propaganda, by threats and by an appeal for Akali Jathas to come

[2] Master Tara Singh had agreed to Jawaharlal Nehru's request not to hold the conference to celebrate the martyrdom day on 19 February as there was a ban on public meetings in the capital. But later about 1000 Sikhs gathered in Ramlila grounds. Tara Singh was arrested on his way to preside over the Conference. The Shiromani Akali Dal Working Committee decided to observe 3 March as protest day.

here. Now obviously this is the path of irresponsibility and it can only lead to trouble. That trouble can be of two kinds: one is a conflict with Government, the other is a widespread impression that Gurdwaras, which are sacred places of worship, are being converted into political meeting places and used as bases for aggressive activity against the Government. Such a reputation for the Gurdwara is not a good one and lowers the high esteem in which the Gurdwara should be held not only by Sikhs but by all others. We have to keep our places of worship above the turmoil and conflict and politics.

I would personally advise very strongly that this proposed conference should be given up. Any religious *Dewan* can of course always be held in the Gurdwara. Any committee meeting to formulate political demands can also always be held privately anywhere. Normally public meetings and conferences can also be held for this purpose provided there is no danger of breach of the peace. At present in Delhi there is far too much tension for any such public conference to be held and therefore this has been stopped by the local authorities.

Because of the considerations I have mentioned above, I trust that nothing will be done to provoke a conflict. I can assure you that we have no desire to come in the way of peaceful gatherings in Gurdwaras meant for the purpose for which Gurdwaras are intended. I would strongly suggest, however, that the political aspect of this question should be separated from the other aspect. The best course would be not to hold the proposed conference in Delhi at this stage and consider the subjects at issue by other means. Any such step would be a sign of wisdom which will be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

19

Sealing of Muslim Shops[1]

It is important that justice should be done; it is even more important that the people concerned should believe that justice has been done. This applies to the adjudication of individual rights, which are supposed to be guaranteed under our Constitution. But what is of vital importance is the effect of any action taken on the larger issue before the country. It seems clear that the action taken in recent weeks on behalf of the Rehabilitation Ministry and chiefly by the various custodians, has had a markedly unfortunate effect on a number of national problems. This effect may have far-reaching consequences, unless it is checked in time. It was for this reason that I wrote to H.M. Rehabilitation yesterday that all sealing of shops and other premises must be stopped immediately not only in Delhi but elsewhere in the country, pending further examination, if necessary by the Cabinet.

In certain other matters too, such as permits, etc., I find that the attitude taken by the officers concerned is more or less a routine attitude and little effort is made in enquiring into the human problems involved.

A citizen of India, whether he is Muslim or non-Muslim, is presumed to have certain rights and these rights cannot be set aside lightly or without positive proof. The line of approach in most of the papers that I have seen is that any Muslim in India may be suspect, if he or any relative of his has had the slightest contact with Pakistan. As such suspect, it is desirable to take swift action against him before he has had time to take advantage of any delay. Therefore, action has to be speedy, even though it may not be wholly justified. This appears to me to be a wrong approach entirely. It must be remembered that our policy is of equal justice to all our citizens. It must also be remembered that over thirty millions of Muslims live in India.

There are many elements in the population who are animated by extreme bitterness and hostility towards Muslims. There are many people who for reasons of cupidity and self-interest want to push out Muslims from their shops and houses so that they might profit by this. It is incumbent on all Government officials and others concerned to prevent these anti-social and anti-national

[1] Note to the Minister for Relief and Rehabilitation, 9 September 1949. JN Collection, NMML. Excerpts.

elements from having their way or being encouraged. It is incumbent on every person in authority to see that the high prestige of our Government does not suffer by any intrusion, bigotry, prejudice or communal feeling.

From the strictly practical point of view, it is obvious that the main offenders have escaped and have taken or transferred large sums of money. At the most some petty offenders remain, who make little difference either way from the financial point of view. I see cases against petty folk–tailors, shoemakers, petty shopkeepers, which have little importance in themselves from any point of view, but which have a great deal of importance when they become examples and symbols of the policy that is being followed. The state benefits little, but the state is injured greatly, if a feeling spreads that justice is not being done. There is no doubt that that feeling is a widespread feeling today among large numbers of our Muslim fellow-countrymen. Any policy that tends to produce or encourage this feeling is an injurious policy and is a failure. It does not matter very much if a few persons who may be guilty escape. It does matter very much indeed if a single innocent person is made to suffer, because that individual case affects large numbers of other persons.

20

The Communal Disease[1]

New Delhi, 17 April 1950

My dear Pantji,

These recent occurrences in the U.P. have greatly distressed me. Or perhaps this was a culmination of what I had been feeling for a long time. People die and the fact of killing, though painful, does not upset me. But what does upset one is the complete degradation of human nature and, even more, the attempt to find justification for this.

I have felt for a long time that the whole atmosphere of the U.P. has been changing for the worse from the communal point of view.[2] Indeed the U.P. is becoming almost a foreign land for me. I do not fit in there. The U.P. Congress Committee, with which I have been associated for 35 years, now functions in a manner which amazes me. Its voice is not the voice of the Congress I have known, but something which I have opposed for the greater part of my life. . . . We talk a great deal of disciplinary action. But these major distortions of the Congress policy are continually being made and accepted.

If the sea loses its saltiness, wherewith shall it be salted.[3]

I have not been to the U.P. for a long time. That is partly due to lack of time, but the real reason is that I hesitate to go there. I do not wish to come into conflict with my old colleagues and I feel terribly uncomfortable there, because I find that communalism has invaded the minds and hearts of those who were the pillars of the Congress in the past. It is a creeping paralysis and the patient does not even realize it. All that occurred in Ayodhya in regard to the Mosque and temples[4] and the hotel in Faizabad[5] was bad enough. But the worst feature

[1] To G.B. Pant. JN Collection, NMML. Excerpts.

[2] The Faizabad–Ayodhya area became a centre of communal tension and this caused anti-Muslim feeling in other districts such as Agra, Mathura and Bareilly.

[3] Gospel of St. Mathew, 5:13: "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thereforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."

[4] Some images of deities were found in the mosque at Ayodhya on the night of 22–23 December 1949.

[5] A Muslim proprietor of a hotel was ordered to vacate it by the district authorities. Some Hindus occupied it the next day.

of it was that such things should take place and be approved by some of our own people and that they should continue.

It seems to me that for some reason or other or perhaps mere political expediency, we have been far too lenient with this disease, that has been spreading all over India and in our own province. Sometimes I feel that I should leave everything and take up this matter only. Perhaps some day I shall do that. If I do it, it will be a crusade with all the strength that I possess.

Law and order prevails in the U.P. and there are no incidents and the exodus has toned down or almost stopped. That is all very good. But the reports I get of the general atmosphere and of petty happenings reveal the true state of affairs even more than major incidents. A Muslim is walking along the street in a city. He is spat upon and told to go to Pakistan or he is given a slap on the face or his beard is pulled. Muslim women have vulgar remarks passed against them in the streets and always there is the taunting remark, "go to Pakistan". Only a few individuals may do these, but we have tolerated the growth of an atmosphere which permits this kind of thing being done and others look on and approve.

I have an instinctive feeling that our people, those who function in the Congress in large numbers, are still fairly sound at heart and can be made to understand. But the leadership is weak and is always compromising with something that is wrong and so the rank and file goes astray.

The fact of the matter is that for all our boasts, we have shown ourselves a backward people, totally lacking in the elements of culture, as any country understands them. It is only those who lack all understanding of culture, who talk so much about it.[6]

Yours,
Jawaharlal

[6] Pant replied on 22 April: "I am ashamed of the atrocities that have been committed in some places in this province. Things seem to be gradually returning to normal but the fact that we could not prevent these deplorable happenings continues to oppress me."

21

A Hindu Rashtra[1]

It may sound very nice to some people to hear it said that we will create a Hindu *rashtra*, etc. I cannot understand what it means. Hindus are in a majority in this country and whatever they wish will be done. But the moment you talk of a Hindu *rashtra* you speak in a language which no other country except one can comprehend and that country is Pakistan because they are familiar with this concept. They can immediately justify their creation of an Islamic nation by pointing out to the world that we are doing something similar. Hindu *rashtra* can only mean one thing and that is you leave the modern way and get into a narrow, old-fashioned way of thinking, and fragment India into pieces. Those who are not Hindus will be reduced in status. You may say patronisingly that you will look after the Muslims or Christians or others, as in Pakistan they say that they will look after the Hindus. Do you think any race or individual will accept for long the claim that they are looked after while we sit high above them? Is this what your Constitution guarantees? We have proclaimed to the world that every citizen of this country has equal rights whatever religion or caste or creed he may belong to and everyone is an equal shareholder in India's freedom. You believe in this, then what these communal organizations say is wrong, fundamentally wrong, useless and harmful and ought to be suppressed.

[1] 6 September, 1951, SWJN, Vol. 16, part II (II). Address at a public meeting organized by the Delhi State Congress Committee. Original in Hindi. Excerpts.

22

Question of Minority Groups[1]

New Delhi, 20 September 1953

My dear Chief Minister,

My colleague, the Home Minister, Dr Katju, is sending you separately a note on the reform of judicial administration in India. This note is a preliminary approach to this problem and we should like to have your comments on it before we consider it in detail. We shall also consult judicial authorities and others concerned. We do not, however, wish to go through any lengthy process of consultation. That would delay matters too much and we are anxious to go ahead. We shall make every effort to produce a Bill for Parliament next November.

I want to share with you a certain apprehension that is growing within me. I feel that in many ways the position relating to minority groups in India is deteriorating. Our Constitution is good and we do not make any distinction in our rules and regulations or laws. But, in effect, changes creep in because of administrative practices of officers. Often these changes are not deliberate. Sometimes, they are so.

In the Services, generally speaking the representation of the minority communities is lessening. In some cases it is very poor indeed. It is true that some of the highest offices in the land are occupied by members of these minority communities. They occupy high places also in our foreign missions. But in looking through Central Government figures, as well as some others, I am distressed to find that the position is very disadvantageous to them, chiefly to the Muslims and sometimes others also.

In our Defence Services, there are hardly any Muslims left. In the vast Central Secretariat of India, there are very few Muslims. Probably the position is somewhat better in the provinces, but not much more so. What concerns me most is that there is no effort being made to improve this situation, which is likely to grow worse unless checked.

It is all very well for us to say that we shall not pay any attention to communal and like considerations in appointments. I am no lover of communalism

[1] To Chief Ministers. File No. 25(6)/53-PMS. Excerpts.

and its works. Indeed, I think it is the most dangerous tendency in India and has to be combated on all fronts. But at the same time, we have to realize that in a vast and mixed country like India we must produce a sense of balance and of assurance of a square deal and future prospects in all parts of the country and in all communities of India. If the tendency is to upset any balance or to emphasize one aspect at the cost of another, the result is a lack of equilibrium and dissatisfaction and frustration among large groups.

This is exactly what is happening and it is not a good thing. I think we should make a very special effort to check this wrong tendency in so far as the Services are concerned. The question is a wider one than the Services, although the Services are an important part in the texture of India. We have to create a sense of partnership in every group and individual in the country, a sense of being a full sharer in the benefits and opportunities that are offered. It is only then that we produce the right attitude of mind. Nothing seems to me so unbecoming as to preach loyalty to others, meaning by that word "loyalty" that everyone should fall in step with us. This is very much like the approach of the Communists in some parts of the world and of the Americans in other parts of the world, each of whom demand uniformity and submission to their way of thinking and life. That brings conflict in the international sphere, and a like approach in the national sphere must inevitably lead to conflict also, apart from being intrinsically wrong.

I have referred to Muslims above, but this applies to Christians and others also. Unfortunately there is a feeling of apprehension among large numbers of our Christian countrymen and countrywomen, and many of them feel uncertain of their place in India in the future. We have always to remember India as a composite country, composite in many ways, in religion, in customs, in languages, in ways of life, etc. An attempt by the majority group to impose itself on others can only lead to inner conflicts, which are as bad as outer conflicts. The basic problem for us today in India is to build up a united India in the real and inner sense of the word, that is, a psychological integration of our people. . . .

The feeling of nationalism is an enlarging, and widening experience for the individual or the nation. More especially, when a country is under foreign domination, nationalism is a strenghtening and unifying force. But a stage arrives when it might well have a narrowing influence. Sometimes, as in Europe, it becomes aggressive and chauvinistic and wants to impose itself on other countries and other people. Every people suffer from the strange delusion that they are the elect and better than all others. When they become strong and powerful, they try to impose themselves and their ways on others. In their attempt to do so, sometime or other, they overreach themselves, stumble and fall. That has been the fate of the intense nationalism of Germany and Japan.

But a more insidious form of nationalism is the narrowness of mind that it develops within a country, when a majority thinks itself as the entire nation and in its attempt to absorb the minority actually separates them even more. We, in India, have to be particularly careful of this because of our tradition of caste and separatism. We have a tendency to fall into separate groups and to forget the larger unity.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

23

New Phase of An Old Problem[1]

New Delhi, 3 September 1954

My dear Chief Minister,

I have written to you about the communal disturbances that have taken place in some parts of India. There are certain rather odd features about these disturbances. On several occasions these disturbances took place rather unexpectedly and there was not obvious tension previously. The technique also appears to be different.

We must take some care to find out how and why each one of these conflicts occurred. It is not good enough to treat them in the old way. I rather doubt if Police reports about them are very satisfactory. The enquiry has to be conducted by really high class men, whether police or other, and not by the normal type of junior police officer.

It is true that there are some Muslims in some centres who might be prone to mischief. There are one or two Muslim organizations that have been carrying on objectionable activities. I do not think there are many Muslims connected with these organizations, but they exert a bad influence. Generally speaking, the Muslim do not and cannot think of any deliberate aggressive activity. Both by virtue of their numbers and their general position in the country, they are frustrated and weak and they know well that any aggression on their part will lead to their own suffering.

The other side of the picture is different. The Hindu communal organizations are definitely aggressive and they can play on the religious or other feelings of the majority community. There is also a new motive, which, previous to the partition, was not present. This is the lure of property. In the pre-partition days, whatever communal trouble took place, no one ever thought of driving out the other party from their houses or shops. No one ever thought of profiting by any such action. Now this new element has come in and it is thought that if the Muslims in a particular area are frightened and made to leave, that property would naturally come to the Hindus, more especially of course the refugees. Even if it does not go directly to them, it might go into the refugee pool.

[1] To Chief Ministers. H.B. Upadhyaya Papers, NMML. Excerpts.

Thus, this new and dangerous incentive comes into play. Of course this applies chiefly to the refugees. Indeed, much of the trouble is caused or, at any rate, begun by the refugees.

Agitations like the anti-cow slaughter one are also used for this purpose. I have no doubt that many people who participate in this agitation are influenced by political or like motives and not so much by religious ones. The R.S.S. utilizes this for its own purposes.

Thus, generally speaking, it may be presumed that the aggression comes from the Hindus or the Sikhs in some cases. Even if an individual Muslim misbehaves, the real aggression comes from the majority community and that petty misbehaviour is made the excuse for such aggression. . . .

All these factors have to be borne in mind and it has to be realized that we are dealing with a new phase of an old problem. We have, therefore, to apply new methods or at least vary our old methods. The first thing is to be wide awake and never allow a situation to deteriorate before taking action. The second thing is to make it clear that the community that takes to aggression will suffer.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

24

Communalism and Casteism[1]

Politically, we are now a well-knit country. We have, if I may say so, a strong and stable government at the centre which itself represents an integrated India. There are also many forces which help in this unifying process. But there are other forces also which tend to distintegrate and weaken this unity. Some of the people who encourage these distintegrating tendencies may do so intentionally, others perhaps unintentionally and not realizing the consequences of what they are doing. So far as the Congress is concerned, and indeed others also, we can never grow complacent, for complacency means a static position which leads to stagnation and decay. It means also an unawareness of these various forces at play, some good and some bad.

We call our state a secular one. The word 'secular' perhaps is not a very happy one. And yet, for want of a better, we have used it. What exactly does it mean? It does not obviously mean a state where religion as such is discouraged. It means freedom of religion and conscience, including freedom for those who may have no religion. It means free play for all religions, subject only to their not interfering with each other or with the basic conceptions of our state. It means that the minority communities, from the religious point of view, should accept this position. It means, even more, that the majority community, from this point of view, should fully realize it. For, by virtue of numbers as well as in other ways, it is the dominant community and it is its responsibility not to use its position in any way which might prejudice our secular ideal.

The word 'secular', however, conveys something much more to me, although that might not be its dictionary meaning. It conveys the idea of social and political equality. Thus, a caste-ridden society is not properly secular. I have no desire to interfere with any person's belief, but when those beliefs become petrified in caste divisions, undoubtedly they affect the social structure of the state. They prevent us from realizing the idea of equality which we claim to place before ourselves. They interfere in political matters, just as communalism interferes. We have opposed communalism and continue to be stoutly opposed to it. It is, in fact, a negation of nationalism and of the national state. Communalism means the dominance of one religious community. If that community is

[1] Circular to the Pradesh Congress Committees, 5 August 1954. JN Papers, NMML.

in a minority, this is opposed to all ideas of democracy. But if that community is in a majority, even so its dominance over others as a religious community would be wholly undemocratic.

. . . Therefore, we have opposed communalism not only in minority communities, but also in the majority community. This argument applies to caste divisions and their functioning on the political plane. . . . It exists and encourages fissiparous tendencies and maintains divisions in our society, which undoubtedly weaken and prevent the growth of a real democratic spirit. Many of us perhaps do not attach enough importance to this. But I have no doubt that casteism is as dangerous as communalism and both are effective barriers, if they are strong enough, to the development of true democracy and equality.

We are apt to take pride in our tradition of tolerance. It is always dangerous to have this complacent attitude about oneself because it hides the truth from us. Few people can see their own weaknesses and failings although they are wide awake to the failings of others.

Our constitution is based on this secular conception and gives freedom to all religions, even freedom to proselytize. Personally, I do not appreciate attempts at proselytization. But that is a personal opinion of my own, and I have no business to thrust it on others. I can understand an individual changing his religion because of certain convictions. I do not understand attempts at mass conversions, which can have no business with individual or personal conviction and which have often behind them some political urge.

25

A Secular State[1]

We talk about a secular state in India. It is perhaps not very easy even to find a good word in Hindi for 'secular'. Some people think that it means something opposed to religion. That obviously is not correct. What it means is that it is a state which honours all faiths equally and gives them equal opportunities; that, as a state, it does not allow itself to be attached to one faith or religion, which then becomes the state religion.

Where the great majority of the people in a state belong to one religion, this fact alone may colour, to some extent, the cultural climate of that state. But nevertheless the state, as a state, can remain independent of any particular religion.

In a sense, this is a more or less modern conception. India has a long history of religious tolerance. That is one aspect of a secular state, but it is not the whole of it. In a country like India, which has many faiths and religions, no real nationalism can be built up except on the basis of secularity. Any narrower approach must necessarily exclude a section of the population, and then nationalism itself will have a much more restricted meaning than it should possess. In India we would have then to consider Hindu nationalism, Muslim nationalism, Sikh nationalism or Christian nationalism and not Indian nationalism.

As a matter of fact, these narrow religious nationalisms are relics of a past age and are no longer relevant today. They represent a backward and out-of-date society. In the measure we have even today so-called communal troubles, we display our backwardness as social groups.

Our constitution lays down that we are a secular state, but it must be admitted that this is not wholly reflected in our mass living and thinking. In a country like England, the state is, under the constitution, allied to one particular religion, the Church of England, which is a sect of Christianity. Nevertheless, the state and the people there largely function in a secular way. Society, therefore, in England is more advanced in this respect than in India, even though our constitution may be, in this matter, more advanced.

We have not only to live up to the ideals proclaimed in our constitution, but make them a part of our thinking and living and thus build up a really

[1] Foreword to *Dharam Nirpeksh Raj* by Raghunath Singh (1961).

integrated nation. That, I repeat, does not mean absence of religion, but putting religion on a different plane from that of normal political and social life. Any other approach in India would mean the breaking up of India.

Acharya Vinoba Bhave has recently been saying that politics and religion are out-of-date. And yet we all know that Vinobaji is an intensely religious man. But his religion is not a narrow one. He has, therefore, added that the world today requires not that narrow religion or debased politics, but science and spirituality. Both these, at different levels, are uniting and broadening factors. Anything that unites and broadens our vision increases our stature and is good and creative. Anything that narrows our outlook and divides us is not good, because it prevents us from growing and keeps us in a groove.

Ultimately even nationalism will prove a narrowing creed, and we shall all be citizens of the world with a truly international vision. For the present, this may be beyond most peoples and most countries. For us in India, we have to build a true nationalism, integrating the various parts and creeds and religions of our country, before we can launch out into real internationalism. Without the basis of a true nationalism, internationalism may be vague and amorphous, without any real meaning. But the nationalism that we build in India should have its doors and windows open to internationalism.

26

Emotional Integration[1]

I am making this direct appeal to all our colleagues and co-workers who serve the Government of India, in whatever capacity they may be functioning.

After fourteen years of independence, fourteen years of hard work and travail, of considerable success and occasional failure, we have arrived at a critical phase in our national existence. Indeed this critical phase applies to the international scene also, and no man can say what the future may bring to this afflicted world.

But our immediate concern is inevitably our own country and the hundreds of millions of people who inhabit it. Even our service to the world can best be achieved through our serving our own people.

We have started on the Third Five-Year Plan. This is a mighty effort, based on the strong foundations laid in the First and Second Five-Year Plans, and aiming still higher. We are determined to succeed in this great adventure. We have faith in it because we have faith in our people, and it is the hard work and cooperative spirit of our people that will bring success and the advancement of our people to greater prosperity and equality of opportunity. The Third Plan will, we hope, take us out of the rut of poverty that has brought so much unhappiness and degradation to our millions.

To make make good plans is not easy, but far more difficult is to implement them. That implementation demands the joint effort of all our people. More particularly, it demands the effort of the vast governmental administrative machinery. I am, therefore, appealing to this vast machinery of government, spread out all over India, which carries the burden of government and on whose activities depends the success of everything that we may undertake.

I appeal to all of them for integrity in the public services. This is not merely an ideal to be thought of or to be aimed at, but something which has to be practically achieved. It is intimately connected with the individual good of all of us. Let our public services be a model of integrity and efficiency, of cooperation and courtesy.

In particular, I would appeal to each one of us to work continuously and deliberately for the promotion of national unity and emotional integration of

[1] An Appeal, 5 July 1961. JN Papers, NMML.

all our people. Thousands of years of history have conditioned our people and made our country what it is—an abiding unity and, at the same time, great diversity. People of many religions live in this country, many great languages flourish among our people. And yet, in spite of this variety, there has been a deeper unity which has held us together. Each one of us must realize that the only future for India and her people is one of tolerance and cooperation which have been the basis of our culture from ages past.

We have laid down in our constitution that India is a secular state. That does not mean irreligion. It means equal respect for all faiths and equal opportunities for those who profess any faith. We have, therefore, always to keep in mind this vital aspect of our culture which is also of the highest importance in the India of today. Those who put up barriers between one Indian and another and who promote disruptive tendencies do not serve the cause of India or her culture. They weaken us at home and discredit us abroad. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that we should work for this emotional integration of India.

This applies to linguistic differences also. It is our proud privilege to have great languages, intimately connected with each other. Let us serve them all and not consider any language which is not our own mother tongue as something alien. All these languages have grown up through the ages and are of the flesh and blood of India. If anyone is injured that injury is of India.

I appeal, therefore, for this conscious effort on the part of all of us for the emotional integration of all our people. I want this translated into the day-to-day activities of ours, official or non-official, so that we may build the India of our dreams.

27

Communal Harmony[1]

India is a country of many communities and unless we can live in harmony with each other, respecting each other's beliefs and habits, we cannot build a great and united nation.

Ever since the distant past, it has been the proud privilege of Indians to live in harmony with each other. That has been the basis of India's culture. Long ago, the Buddha taught us this lesson. From the days of Asoka, 2,300 years ago, this aspect of our thought has been repeatedly declared and practised. In our own day, Mahatma Gandhi laid great stress on it and, indeed, lost his life because he laid great stress on communal goodwill and harmony. We have, therefore, a precious heritage to keep up, and we cannot allow ourselves to act contrary to it.

Pakistan came into existence on the basis of hatred and intolerance. We must not allow ourselves to react to this in the same way. That surely will be a defeat for us. We have to live up to our immemorial culture and try to win over those who are opposed to us. To compete with each other in hatred and barbarity is to sink below the human level and tarnish the name of our country and our people. One evil deed leads to another. Thus evil grows. That is not the way to stop these inhuman deeds. If we can behave with tolerance and friendship to each other, that surely will have its effect elsewhere. If not, this vicious circle will go on bringing sorrow and disaster to all of us and others.

It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that we should realize our duty to all our countrymen, whoever they might be. We must always remember that every Indian, to whatever religion he might belong, is a brother and must be treated as such.

I earnestly trust that our efforts will be directed towards creating communal harmony and that all our people, and especially our newspapers, will appreciate the grave dangers that are caused by communal conflict and disharmony. Let us all be careful in what we say or write which might create fear and conflict. Let us pull ourselves together and create an atmosphere of cooperation and work for the advancement of India and of all who live here as her sons. Thus only can we serve our motherland and help in making her great, united and strong. *Jai Hind.*

[1] Broadcast to the Nation, 26 March 1964. JN Papers, NMML.

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1

Home Rule[1]

Sir,

Qui Deus vult perdere prius dementat[2]—so said the wise men of old and we are seeing the proverb justify itself in our ancient land. You, Sir, have expressed yourself strongly, and rightly so, against the recent orders[3] of the Government of Madras. But with my sorrow at the treatment accorded to Mrs. Besant is mingled joy and gladness that this day has come. For madness has fallen on the bureaucracy and that is the surest presage of their coming fall. Home Rule has come and we have but to take it if we stand up like men and falter not.

The usual meetings of protest against Mrs. Besant's internment are being announced and our city of Allahabad is going to express its condemnation tomorrow. We shall no doubt have a demonstration worthy of the occasion, eloquent and moving speeches will be made and resolutions will be passed. But will that be all? Are we going to indulge in mere protests and representations as we have done for so many weary years? We have had enough of protest meetings; Allahabad is used to them, and no doubt our benign Government is also getting accustomed to them. Ours have been the politics of cowards and opium-eaters long enough and it is time we thought and acted like live men and women who place the honour and interests of their country above the frowns and smiles of every Tom, Dick and Harry who has I.C.S. attached to his name. Let us make it clear to the powers that be that we will not tolerate this high-handedness, and as long as and until they do not retrace their steps, there shall be no cooperation between the people and the Government. Every one of us who holds an honorary position under the Government should resign it and refuse to have anything to do with the bureaucracy. I am aware that many will not be prepared to do this, that they would sooner go to the devil than offend the collector. Of the likes of such we have no need, we want no faint hearts or wobblers in the Home Rule League. Let them, even though they be Knights or

[1] Letter to the Editor, *The Leader*, 21 June 1917. JN Papers, NMML. Excerpts.

[2] Those whom the gods wish to destroy, they first make mad.

[3] In 1917 the Madras Government interned Mrs. Besant, G.S. Arundale and B.P. Wadia in Ootacamund, prohibited them from speaking, writing and publishing, and censored their correspondence.

C.I.Es. or Rai Bahadurs or even Vice-Chancellors of Universities, let them part company with us and continue to kow-tow before and worship at the feet of our masters from across the seas. The wheat will be all the purer when the chaff is removed. . . .

Anand Bhawan
21 June 1917

I am etc.,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2

The Rai Bareli Tragedy[1]

History, they say, repeats itself.[2] In the month of April, in the ever memorable year 1919, the heart of Amritsar City was soaked with the blood of Indians, slain most wantonly and cruelly, and a day or two later Sir Michael O'Dwyer blessed the deed. A year and eight months have gone by, fateful months in the history of India and the British Empire. Britain still holds India even though that hold may be slackening. The British Empire still continues its iniquitous career even though it be on the brink of a precipice. Sir Michael O'Dwyer has gone but Sir Harcourt Butler,[3] the just, the wise, the sympathetic, remains to carry on the traditions of British rule and British justice. And so it is that Indian blood is again shed and the Governor hastens, without respite, without enquiry, without thought, to offer his congratulations to all concerned "and specially Sirdar Birpal Singh".[4] And the Commissioner says ditto and the Deputy Commissioner says Amen.

And what of the kisans? Poor, miserable, downtrodden men and women, ever in want, ever suffering, seldom complaining. What of them? Their blood lies on the banks of the Sai river,[5] their bodies rot under a thin layer of sand or in the open, a prey to the beasts who feast on the dead. And the living have a worse fate reserved for them. They have the police and the minions of the taluqdars torturing them and beating them and imprisoning them. Yet not a word of sympathy came from the Governor. He sat in his palace well looked after, well-fed. What did he wreak of the hungry millions? What did he care for the sorrowing widows and orphans? They were but the victims of law and order. The Pax Britannica must be preserved even though the peace it gives is the peace of the grave.

[1] *The Independent,* 22 January 1921. JN Papers, NMML.

[2] The police firing at Fursatganj bazar in Munshiganj, Rai Bareli on 6 and 7 January 1921, killed 13 kisans.

[3] Member of the Indian Civil Service; at that time Lieutenant Governor of the United Provinces; known to be partial to the taluqdars.

[4] A Sikh taluqdar of Rai Bareli whose ancestors had migrated from the Punjab to U.P. In the Rai Bareli tragedy of 7 January 1921, he was generally believed to have fired the first shot. After the firing he was specially congratulated by the Lieutenant Governor.

[5] A river flowing through Unao, Rai Bareli and Pratapgarh districts in Uttar Pradesh.

I have read with amazement many of the accounts and comments on the Rai Bareli tragedy. A fresh version appears almost daily and lie upon lie is piled up. Cunningly worded communiques are issued by Government and by dint of sheer repetition it is made to appear that the blame largely rests with the kisans. Even the redoubtable Sirdar Birpal Singh has ventured to deny the charges brought against him by a host of people. A little labour and some common sense will show the absurdity of many of the allegations made against the kisans. To those who know the kisans the allegations of the wrong doings must have sounded almost incredible. I have had the privilege of working for them, of mixing with them, of living in their mud-huts and partaking in all reverence of their lowly fare. And I, who for long believed in the doctrine of the sword, have been converted by the kisans to the doctrine of nonviolence. I have come to believe that nonviolence is ingrained in them and is part of their very nature. For long they have been too peaceful, even to the extent of submitting to evil, but now the fear of consequences is fast disappearing and their long-lost courage is coming back. But they hold fast to nonviolence. It is not the masses but we, nurtured in an atmosphere of the West, who talk glibly of the inefficiency of peaceful methods. The masses know the power of ahimsa.

The kisans were shot at Munshiganj because they would not go away at the bidding of the Deputy Commissioner or even of Sirdar Birpal Singh. They sat there patiently regardless of threats, not fearing the serried ranks of the armed police. They offered no violence, neither were they overawed by fear of death. They had come to help a comrade and they would not desert him. Some were cooking. The mounted police charged into the crowd and trampled many and then it is said that some threw stones. And Sirdar Birpal Singh had to fire in self-defence and the police had to fire though no one ordered it to do so. A strange story which grows stranger as the days go by.

It is easy to blame the kisans. I would beg of their critics to transplant themselves from their armchairs for a while to the banks of the river Sai and imagine what I saw on the afternoon of the 7th January. Thousands of kisans were gathered there. The police and military were near them, armed and ready for all contingencies, and on the other side of the little river blood was being shed, the blood of their kith and kin, bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. What must they have thought at the time? How behaved? Cowards would have run away. The rash and the violent would have lost their head and charged the police and the military. And who, according to the ethics of the modern world, would have blamed them if they had sought to rescue their brethren under fire? How would their critics have behaved?

I know not what they thought but I saw and marvelled at their demeanour. They behaved as brave men, calm and unruffled in the face of danger, I do not know how they felt but I know what my feelings were. For a moment my blood was up, nonviolence was almost forgotten—but for a moment only. The

thought of the great leader, who by God's goodness has been sent to lead us to victory, came to me, and I saw the kisans seated and standing near me, less excited, more peaceful than I was—and the moment of weakness passed. I spoke to them in all humility on nonviolence—I, who needed the lesson more than they—and they heeded me and peacefully dispersed. On the other side of the river, however, men lay dead and dying. It was a similar crowd with a similar object. Yet they poured their hearts' blood before they would disperse.

3

Noncooperation[1]

Some people complained that noncooperation was intolerant and tended to introduce a dead uniformity of opinion and action. There was truth in this complaint, but the truth lay in this, that noncooperation was a mass movement, and it was led by a man of commanding personality who inspired devotion in India's millions. A more vital truth, however, lay in its effect on the masses. There was a tremendous feeling of release there, a throwing-off of a great burden, a new sense of freedom. The fear that had crushed them retired into the background, and they straightened their backs and raised their heads. Even in remote bazaars the common folk talked of the Congress and Swaraj (for the Nagpur Congress had finally made Swaraj the goal),[2] and what had happened in the Punjab, and the Khilafat—but the word 'Khilafat' bore a strange meaning in most of the rural areas. People thought it came from *khilafat*, an Urdu word meaning 'against' or 'opposed to', and so they took it to mean: opposed to Government! They discussed, of course, especially their own particular economic grievances. Innumerable meetings and conferences added greatly to their political education.

Many of us who worked for the Congress programme lived in a kind of intoxication during the year 1921. We were full of excitement and optimism and a buoyant enthusiasm. We sensed the happiness of a person crusading for a cause. We were not troubled with doubts or hesitation; our path seemed to lie clear in front of us and we marched ahead, lifted up by the enthusiasm of others, and helping to push on others. We worked hard, harder than we had ever done before, for we knew that the conflict with the Government would come soon, and we wanted to do as much as possible before we were removed.

Above all, we had a sense of freedom and a pride in that freedom. The old feeling of oppression and frustration was completely gone. There was no more whispering, no roundabout legal phraseology to avoid getting into trouble with the authorities. We said what we felt and shouted it out from the house-tops.

[1] From *An Autobiography*, pp. 69-78.

[2] On 31 December 1929 at the Indian National Congress held at Lahore a resolution declaring Purna Swaraj (complete independence) as the goal was passed and called upon Congressmen to resign from legislatures and official committees and not participate in elections.

What did we care for the consequences? Prison? We looked forward to it; that would help our cause still further. The innumerable spies and secret-service men who used to surround us and follow us about became rather pitiable individuals as there was nothing secret for them to discover. All our cards were always on the table.

We had not only a feeling of satisfaction at doing effective political work which was changing the face of India before our eyes and, as we believed, bringing Indian freedom very near, but also an agreeable sense of moral superiority over our opponents, both in regard to our goal and our methods. We were proud of our leader and of the unique method he had evolved, and often we indulged in fits of self-righteousness. In the midst of strife, and while we ourselves encouraged that strife, we had a sense of inner peace.

As our morale grew, that of the Government went down. They did not understand what was happening; it seemed that the old world they knew in India was toppling down. There was a new aggressive spirit abroad and self-reliance and fearlessness, and the great prop of British rule in India—prestige—was visibly wilting. Repression in a small way only strengthened the movement, and the Government hesitated for long before it would take action against the big leaders. It did not know what the consequences might be. Was the Indian Army reliable? Would the police carry out orders? As Lord Reading, the Viceroy, said in December 1921, they were "puzzled and perplexed".

An interesting circular was sent confidentially by the U.P. Government to its district officers in the summer of 1921. This circular, which was published later in a newspaper, stated with sorrow that the "initiative" was always with the "enemy", meaning the Congress, and this was an unfortunate state of affairs. Various methods were then suggested to regain the initiative, among them being the starting of those ludicrous bodies, the "Asian Sabhas". It was believed that this particular method of combating noncooperation was adopted at the suggestion of the Liberal Ministers.

The nerves of many a British official began to give way. The strain was great. There was this ever-growing opposition and spirit of defiance which overshadowed official India like a vast monsoon cloud, and yet because of its peaceful methods it offered no handle, no grip, no opportunity for forcible suppression. The average Englishman did not believe in the *bonafides* of nonviolence; he thought that all this was camouflage, a cloak to cover some vast secret design which would burst out in violent upheaval one day. Nurtured from childhood in the widespread belief that the East is a mysterious place, and in its bazaars and narrow lanes secret conspiracies are being continually hatched, the Englishman can seldom think straight on matters relating to these lands of supposed mystery. He never makes an attempt to understand that somewhat obvious and very unmysterious person, the easterner. He keeps well away from him, gets his ideas about him from tales abounding in spies and secret societies,

and then allows his imagination to run riot. So it was in the Punjab early in April 1919 when a sudden fear overwhelmed the authorities and the English people generally, made them see danger everywhere, a widespread rising, a second mutiny with its frightful massacres, and, in a blind, instinctive attempt at self-preservation at any cost, led them to that frightfulness, of which Jallianwala and the Crawling Lane of Amritsar have become symbols and bywords. . . .

Gandhiji, indeed, was continually laying stress on the religious and spiritual side of the movement. His religion was not dogmatic, but it did mean a definitely religious outlook on life, and the whole movement was strongly influenced by this and took on a revivalist character so far as the mases were concerned. The great majority of Congress workers naturally tried to model themselves after their leader and even repeated his language. And yet Gandhiji's leading colleagues in the Working Committee—my father, Deshbandhu Das, Lala Lajpat Rai, and others—were not men of religion in the ordinary sense of the world, and they considered political problems on the political plane only. In their public utterances they did not bring in religion. But whatever they said had far less influence than the force of their personal example—had they not given up a great deal that the world values and taken to simpler ways of living? This in itself was taken as a sign of religion and helped in spreading the atmosphere of revivalism.

I used to be troubled sometimes at the growth of this religious element in our politics, both on the Hindu and the Muslim side. I did not like it at all. Much that Moulvies and Maulanas and Swamis and the like said in their public addresses seemed to me most unfortunate. Their history and sociology and economics appeared to me all wrong, and the religious twist that was given to everything prevented all clear thinking. Even some of Gandhiji's phrases sometimes jarred upon me—thus his frequent reference to *Rama Raj* as a golden age which was to return. But I was powerless to intervene, and I consoled myself with the thought that Gandhiji used the words because they were well known and understood by the masses. He had an amazing knack of reaching the heart of the people.

But I did not worry myself much over these matters. I was too full of my work and the progress of our movement to care for such trifles, as I thought at the time they were. A vast movement had all sorts and kinds of people in it, and so long as our main direction was correct, a few eddies and backwaters did not matter. As for Gandhiji himself, he was a very difficult person to understand, sometimes his language was almost incomprehensible to an average modern. But we felt that we knew him quite well enough to realize that he was a great and unique man and a glorious leader, and having put our faith in him we gave him an almost blank cheque, for the time being at least. Often we discussed his fads and peculiarities among ourselves and said, half-humorously, that when Swaraj came these fads must not be encouraged.

Many of us, however, were too much under his influence in political and other matters to remain wholly immune even in the sphere of religion. Where a direct attack might not have succeeded, many an indirect approach went a long way to undermine the defences. The outward ways of religion did not appeal to me, and above all I disliked the exploitation of the people by the so-called men of religion, but still I toned down towards it. I came nearer to a religious frame of mind in 1921 than at any other time since my early boyhood. Even so I did not come very near.

What I admired was the moral and ethical side of our movement and of satyagraha. I did not give an absolute allegiance to the doctrine of nonviolence or accept it forever, but it attracted me more and more, and the belief grew upon me that, situated as we were in India and with our background and traditions, it was the right policy for us. The spiritualization of politics, using the word not in its narrow religious sense, seemed to me a fine idea. A worthy end should have worthy means leading up to it. That seemed not only a good ethical doctrine but sound, practical politics, for the means that are not good often defeat the end in view and raise new problems and difficulties. And then it seemed so unbecoming, so degrading to the self-respect of an individual or a nation to submit to such means, to go through the mire. How can one escape being sullied by it? How can we march ahead swiftly and with dignity if we stoop or crawl?

Such were my thoughts then. And the noncooperation movement offered me what I wanted—the goal of national freedom and (as I thought) the ending of the exploitation of the underdog, and the means which satisfied my moral sense gave me a sense of personal freedom. So great was this personal satisfaction that even a possibility of failure did not count for much, for such failure could only be temporary. . . .

So we went on, vaguely but intensely, the exhilaration of action holding us in its grip. But about our goal there was an entire absence of clear thinking. It seems surprising now, how completely we ignored the theoretical aspects, the philosophy of our movement as well as the definite objective that we should have. Of course we all grew eloquent about Swaraj, but each one of us probably interpreted the word in his or her own way. To most of the younger men it meant political independence, or something like it, and a democratic form of government, and we said so in our public utterances. Many of us also thought that inevitably this would result in a lessening of the burdens that crushed the workers and the peasantry. But it was obvious that to most of our leaders Swaraj meant something much less than independence. Gandhiji was delightfully vague on the subject, and he did not encourage clear thinking about it either. But he always spoke, vaguely but definitely, in terms of the underdog, and this brought great comfort to many of us, although, at the same time, he was full of assurances to the top dog also. Gandhiji's stress was never on the intellectual approach to a problem but on character and piety. He did succeed amazingly

in giving backbone and character to the Indian people. There were many, however, who developed neither much backbone nor character, but who imagined that a limp body and a flabby look might be the outward semblance of piety.

It was this extraordinary stiffening-up of the masses that filled us with confidence. A demoralized, backward, and broken-up people suddenly straightened their backs and lifted their heads and took part in disciplined, joint action on a country-wide scale. This action itself, we felt, would give irresistable power to the masses. We ignored the necessity of thought behind the action; we forgot that without a conscious ideology and objective the energy and enthusiasm of the masses must end largely in smoke. To some extent the revivalist element in our movement carried us on; a feeling that nonviolence as conceived for political or economic movements or for righting wrongs was a new message which our people were destined to give to the world. We became victims to the curious illusion of all peoples and all nations that in some way they are a chosen race. Nonviolence was the moral equivalent of war and of all violent struggle. It was not merely an ethical alternative, but it was effective also. Few of us, I think, accepted Gandhiji's old ideas about machinery and modern civilization. We thought that even he looked upon them as utopian and as largely inapplicable to modern conditions. Certainly most of us were not prepared to reject the achievements of modern civilization, although we may have felt that some variation to suit Indian conditions was possible. Personally, I have always felt attracted towards big machinery and fast travelling. Still there can be no doubt that Gandhiji's ideology influenced many people and made them critical of the machine and all its consequences. So, while some looked to the future, other looked back to the past. And, curiously, both felt that the joint action they were indulging in was worthwhile, and this made it easy to bear sacrifice and face self-denial.

I became wholly absorbed and wrapt in the movement, and large numbers of other people did likewise. I gave up all my other associations and contacts, old friends, books, even newspapers, except in so far as they dealt with the work in hand. I had kept up till then some reading of current books and had tried to follow the developments of world affairs. But there was no time for this now. In spite of the strength of my family bonds, I almost forgot my family, my wife, my daughter. It was only long afterwards that I realized what a burden and a trial I must have been to them in those days, and what amazing patience and tolerance my wife had shown towards me. I lived in offices and committee meetings and crowds. "Go to the villages" was the slogan, and we trudged many a mile across fields and visited distant villages and addressed peasant meetings. I experienced the thrill of mass-feeling, the power of influencing the mass. I began to understand a little the psychology of the crowd, the difference between the city masses and the peasantry, and I felt at home in the dust and discomfort, the pushing and jostling of large gatherings, though their want of discipline

often irritated me. Since those days I have sometimes had to face hostile and angry crowds, worked up to a state when a spark would light a flame, and I found that that early experience and the confidence it begot in me stood me in good stead. Always I went straight to the crowd and trusted it, and . . . I have always had courtesy and appreciation from it, even though there was no agreement. But crowds are fickle, and the future may have different experiences in store for me.

I took to the crowd and the crowd took to me, and yet I never lost myself in it; always I felt apart from it. From my separate mental perch I looked at it critically, and I never ceased to wonder how I, who was so different in every way from those thousands who surrounded me, different in habits, in desires, in mental and spiritual outlook, how I had managed to gain goodwill and a measure of confidence from these people. Was it because they took me for something other than I was? Would they bear with me when they knew me better? Was I gaining their goodwill under false pretences? I tried to be frank and straightforward to them; I even spoke harshly to them sometimes and criticized many of their pet beliefs and customs, but still they put up with me. And yet I could not get rid of the idea that their affection was meant not for me as I was, but for some fanciful image of me that they had formed. How long could that false image endure? And why should it be allowed to endure? And when it fell down and they saw the reality, what then?

I am vain enough in many ways, but there could be no question of vanity with these crowds of simple folk. There was no posing about them, no vulgarity, as in the case of many of us of the middle classes who consider ourselves their betters. They were dull certainly, uninteresting individually, but in the mass they produced a feeling of overwhelming pity and a sense of ever impending tragedy.

4

First Arrest[1]

To my colleagues of the U.P. Congress Committee:

Some days ago you did me the high honour of appointing me the General Secretary of the Committee. I have not been able to serve you in that capacity for long. Today a higher honour and a greater service await me and I welcome it with the conviction that you will carry on the work of the Committee more vigorously and successfully than my co-secretaries and I were able to do. It has pleased Providence to give this province a chance of leading the fight for liberty. May you, the representatives of the people, prove worthy of this high trust. The work of the Provincial Committee must on no account suffer, workers from the districts must come to the headquarters and keep the flag flying at the citadel. I trust that there will be a full attendance of members at the General Meeting on the 13th in Allahabad.

Theirs will be a great responsibility. May God guide their deliberations and give them strength and wisdom. One thing I would have you remember. There can be no compromise or parleying with evil. This struggle must and can only end in complete victory for the people. Any weakening, any giving up of principles will be a betrayal of the thousands who have given of their best for the cause.

Au Revoir! We meet again, I hope, as free men.

Message to the Citizens of Allahabad

Friends, I go to jail with the greatest pleasure, and with the fullest conviction that therein lies the achievement of our goal. Forget not that there is a complete hartal on the 12th instant, and that it is the duty of every man to enrol himself as a volunteer. The most important thing is to preserve complete peace and an atmosphere of nonviolence. In your hands is the honour of Allahabad,

[1] Message issued by Jawaharlal Nehru. *The Independent,* 8 December 1921. He was arrested on 6 December for taking part in the boycott of the visit of the Prince of Wales to India.

and I hope it is quite safe therein. I trust you will always be in the firing line in the battle of Swaraj and make the name of our city immortal in our annals. I am, your friend,

Jawaharlal Nehru

5

Statement at Trial[1]

I am making this statement not in order to defend myself against the various charges brought against me but to define my position and to state the motives which have induced me to act in the manner I have done. I have refused to plead guilty or not guilty and I have declined to participate in this trial by cross-examination of witnesses or otherwise. I have done so because I do not recognize this court as a court where justice is administered. I mean no disrespect to the presiding officer when I say that so far as political offences are concerned, the courts in India merely register decrees of the executive. They are being used today even more than ever before to prop up the fabric of a government which has misgoverned India long enough and of which the prestige is gone for ever.

I stand here charged with criminal intimidation and abetment of an attempt to extort. The warrant of my arrest bears also the familiar Section 124 A, although I am not being tried for it today. I propose however to make a comprehensive statement. I cannot divide myself up into various compartments, one for picketing, another for sedition and yet another perhaps for volunteering. All my activities have but one end in view and that end I have striven to attain with all the strength and energy that is in me.

Less than ten years ago I returned from England after a lengthy stay there. I had passed through the usual course of public school and university. I had imbibed most of the prejudices of Harrow and Cambridge and in my likes and dislikes I was perhaps more an Englishman than an Indian. I looked upon the world almost from an Englishman's stand-point. And so I returned to India as much prejudiced in favour of England and the English as it was possible for an Indian to be.

Today, ten years later, I stand here in the dock charged with two offences and with a third hovering in the background—an ex-convict who has been to jail once already for a political offence, and a rebel against the present system of government in India. That is the change which the years have wrought in me.

[1] *The Leader*, 19 May 1922. JN Papers, NMML. Excerpts.

On 17 May 1922 Jawaharlal was tried by K.N. Knox, District Magistrate of Allahabad, on a charge of intimidating cloth merchants by organizing the picketing of the sale of foreign cloth.

It is not necessary for me to recite the reasons for this change. Every Indian knows them; every Indian has felt them and has hung his head in shame for them. And if he has retained a spark of the old fire in him, he has taken a solemn pledge to strive unceasingly for India's freedom, so that his countrymen may never again be subjected to the miseries and humiliations that are the lot of a subject race. Today sedition against the present Government in India has become the creed of the Indian people, to preach and practise disaffection against the evil which it represents has become their chief occupation.

I am charged with criminal intimidation, and attempted extortion. I have wondered if these charges were seriously meant. The sections of the code which have been applied bear no relation to the facts even as disclosed by the prosecution evidence. I presume that the signal success that has attended our efforts in Allahabad has induced the authorities to take some action against the picketers. If peaceful picketing for a lawful object is a crime then indeed I am guilty of having advised it and helped in it. But I have yet to learn that peaceful picketing has become an offence even under the laws of British India. Our object in picketing was to make the cloth dealers adhere to the pledges they had jointly taken. Does anyone believe that we could achieve success in this by criminal intimidation and extortion? All the world knows that our strength lies in the support of our people and the goodwill of our countrymen. Our weapons are not the old time ones of force and coercion. The weapons which our great leader has put in our hands are those of love and self-sacrifice. We suffer ourselves, and by our suffering seek to convert our adversary. . . .

I am glad for many reasons that I am being tried for picketing. My trial will bring the question of the boycott of foreign cloth even more to the front; and I am confident that when the people of Allahabad and the province realize the full significance of the boycott they will discard all foreign cloth, treat it as unholy and the touch of it almost as a pollution. If they pondered over the evils and the misery and the poverty that foreign cloth has brought to this long-suffering country, perhaps they would feel some of the horror I feel at the thought of wearing it. They will not bring forth arguments that old clothes have to be worn or that festivities require fine clothing. They would know that the salvation of India and of her hungry millions demanded the use of the charkha and the wearing of khaddar, and they would cast out all foreign clothes and consign them to the flames or to the dustbin. I pray that the cloth merchants of Allahabad will adhere to their sacred pledge twice taken, and do their utmost to bring about a complete boycott of foreign cloth in this ancient and holy city. Some of these cloth dealers have given evidence for the prosecution in this case. I have no grievance against them. I shall suffer most gladly any imprisonment that may be awarded me if I know that thereby I have touched their hearts and won them over to the great cause. And I would appeal to the public of this city and province and earnestly request them to do this much for their country—

wear khaddar and ply the charkha.

My co-accused and I are charged with intimidation and extortion. I should like the police and Government officials to examine their own consciences, to search deep down into their hearts and say what many of them have done during the past year and a half. Intimidation and terrorism, bribery and extortion have been going on over the length and breadth of the province. And the persons guilty of them have not been Congressmen or our volunteers but the underlings of Government who have indulged in them frequently with the knowledge and approval of their superiors. Yet they are not tried or punished. They are patted on the back and praised and promoted.

My colleagues and I have seen, and personally investigated, acts of terrorism and inhumanity. We have seen how men and women have been subjected to uttermost humiliation. . . .

Intimidation and terrorism have become the chief instruments of Government. By these methods they seek to keep down a people and to suppress their disaffection. Do they imagine that they will thus instil affection for themselves in the people or make them loyal instruments of their Imperialism? Affection and loyalty are of the heart. They cannot be purchased in the market place, much less can they be extorted at the point of the bayonet. Loyalty is a fine thing. But in India some words have lost their meaning and loyalty has come to be almost a synonym for treason to the Motherland, and a loyalist is he who is not loyal to his God or his country but merely hangs on to the coat-tails of his alien master. Today, however, we have rescued the word from the depths and in almost every jail in India will be found true loyalists who have put their cause and their faith and their country above everything else and have been true to them despite all consequences. To them has come the great call; they have seen the vision of freedom and they will not rest or turn away till they have achieved their heart's desire. England is a mighty country with her armies and her navies, but today she is confronted with something that is mightier. Her armies and her navies have to face the suffering and the self-sacrifice of a nation determined to be free, and no man can doubt what the issue of such a struggle must be. We are fighting for our freedom, for the freedom of our country and faith. We desire to injure no nation or people. We wish to have no domination over others. But we must be perfectly free in our own country. England has wronged us cruelly during the past 150 years or more. And even yet she has not repented or mended her ways. India gave her a chance a year and a half ago but in the pride and arrogance of her physical might she has not taken it. The people of India have tried her and they have passed judgement and from that decree there is no turning back. India will be free; of that there is no doubt, but if England seeks the friendship of a free India she must repent and purge herself of her many sins, so that she may be worthy of a place in the coming order of

things.

I shall go to jail again most willingly and joyfully. Jail has indeed become a haven for us, a holy place of pilgrimage since our saintly and beloved leader was sentenced. Big-bodied, great-hearted Shaukat Ali, bravest of the brave, and his gallant brother are there and so are thousands of our co-workers. One feels almost lonely outside the jail, and selfishness prompts a quick return. Perhaps I shall be awarded a long term of imprisonment this time. Whether this is so or not, I shall go with the conviction that I shall come out to greet Swaraj in India.

I have said many hard things about the British Government. For one thing, however, I must offer it my grateful thanks. It has given us a chance of fighting in this most glorious of struggles. Surely few people have had such an opportunity given them. And the greater our suffering, the more difficult the test we have to pass, the more splendid will be the future of India. India has not survived through thousands of years to go down now. India has not sent twenty-five thousand of her noblest and best sons to the jails to give up the struggle. India's future is assured. Some of us, men and women of little faith, doubt and hesitate occasionally. But those who have vision can almost see the glory that is to be India.

I marvel at my good fortune. To serve India in the battle of freedom is honour enough. To serve her under a leader like Mahatma Gandhi is doubly fortunate. But to suffer for the dear country; what greater good fortune could befall an Indian unless it be death for the cause or the full realization of our glorious dream.

6

Imperialism[1]

Mr. President and friends,

I have the greatest pleasure in conveying the warm and cordial greetings of the Indian National Conress to this Conferenee and in associating our national movement with this joint endeavour to combat imperialism. We in India have felt the full weight of imperialism. We know exactly what it means, and we are naturally interested in any movement which concerns imperialism. Indeed, if you want a really typical example to enable you to understand the results of imperialism I doubt if you could find a better one than India. In India's internal condition, as our President[2] pointed out, you see the way in which British capitalism has suppressed and exploited the workers. Whatever phase of imperialism you study, you have a wonderful example in India. Our problems, of course, concern us deeply, but I would venture to point out to you, whether you come from China, Egypt or other distant countries, that our interests are much the same, and the problem of India is of interest and importance to you.

It is not possible for me here to tell you the story of Indian exploitation, of the way in which India has been utilized, suppressed and exploited by other people. It is a long and distressing story, and all I can do is to point out to you one or two of the more important factors, which we in this International Congress must especially bear in mind, because they have a particular relation to the work we have to do. You have heard of various disturbances, of various massacres and shootings, and most of you have heard of the Amritsar affair. Do not imagine that because it gained greater notoriety in the world than many other events that it stood alone as the worst incident in the history of India since the British arrived there. They came there, as you are no doubt aware, taking sides first with one party and then another, and thus gradually taking a firm hold. Right through their stay there they have adopted the old policy of 'Divide and Rule'. I regret to say that that policy is still very much in evidence. Well, they came and the earlier history of their occupation is one of the most atrocious

[1] Speech at the International Congress Against Imperialism, Brussels, 10 February 1927. AICC File No. G-29(82-A)/1927, Part I, pp. 85–9, NMML. Excerpts.

[2] Stephen Owen Davies (1886–1972); leader of the South Wales Miners' Federation; M.P., 1934–72.

and shameless examples ever seen in the history of the whole world. It is admitted, even by British historians who are not exactly impartial in the matter, that the earlier history of India under the rule of the British is simply a predatory one, a predatory period where freebooters went unrestricted and looted and despoiled the country. Also perhaps you know of what is called the Indian Mutiny, which took place 70 years ago. It is called the Indian Mutiny, but if chance had willed it otherwise and the rebels had been successful, it might have been called the Indian War of Independence. But what I was really pointing out to you in passing was this—Amritsar was nothing to what happened in the case of what is called the Indian Mutiny, but since then things have been happening continually and it is even now not at all uncommon for shooting to take place, in fact, it is terribly common for innumerable comrades and friends of ours to go to jail with or without trial. Indeed, many of our best comrades in India usually live in jail, or are exiled and unable to return to their homeland. You may have heard also perhaps of not a new but a favourite way of the British in India, of taking hold of people and putting them in jail without trial or even accusation. This sometimes attracts a little attention. But the real injury that the British have done to India, the real exploitation is something even more serious than the shootings, hangings, massacres which occasionally gain some notoriety. That is the systematic way in which they have crushed the workers and peasants of India, and made India what she is today. We read in history, not only ancient but even fairly recent history, of the riches of India. India has attracted various peoples from various corners of the world because of her wealth and riches, and today if you come to India the one fact staring you in the face is the terrible poverty there. The way in which the great majority of the people do not know where to find their next meal, and as a consequence, often not getting their meals, gradually die of starvation or semi-starvation is appalling.

That is the state of India today. It does not require statistics, facts or figures to convince you that India in the course of the last few generations has deteriorated terribly and is in such a bad way that if something drastic is not done to stop this process India may even cease to exist as a nation. You know, perhaps, that years ago—soon after the British came—how ruthless they were in their endeavour to make industries profitable to themselves. In those days the new doctrine of the trusteeship of the Indian peoples was not mentioned. Our oppression was perhaps not worse than it is today, but it was franker. There was ruthless and open exploitation and suppression of all Indian industries. This was bad enough but even worse followed. Gradually, by means of suppressing old systems of education, by disarming us, and in a hundred and one different ways they crushed the spirit of the Indian people and tried to make them lose all capacity for effective and creative work. That, I say, was the deliberate policy of the British in India and they carried it out by trying to divide us among

ourselves. Having disarmed us they tell us that we are not capable of defending our country. Having brought in a system of education which killed all our old education, and substituted something which was ridiculously small and ridiculously inadequate, having taught us false history and attempted to teach us to despise our own country and to glorify England, they now tell us we are not sufficiently educated to be a free country! . . .

I want you to appreciate that the Indian problem is not a purely national problem, but that it affects a large number of other countries directly and the whole world indirectly, in the sense that it directly affects the greatest and most powerful imperialism of our time. It is obvious that such a condition of affairs is intolerable for us in India. We cannot go on, not merely because freedom is good and slavery bad, but because it is a matter of life and death for us and our country. Not only that; it is equally intolerable for you. You cannot go on in this way. You who come from various countries, from the four corners of the earth, cannot put up with having these tremendous barriers to your own liberation. I do submit that the exploitation of India by the British is a barrier for other countries that are being oppressed and exploited. It is an urgent necessity for you that we gain our freedom. The noble example of the Chinese nationalists has filled us with hope, and we earnestly want as soon as we can to be able to emulate them and follow in their footsteps. We desire the fullest freedom for our country, not only, of course, internally, but the freedom to develop such relations with our neighbours and other countries as we may desire. It is because we think that this International Congress affords us a chance of this cooperation that we welcome it and greet it.

7

Resolution on Independence[1]

Various criticisms and interpretations of the independence resolution[2] have appeared in the press. As there appears to be some misapprehension about this resolution, I desire as a Secretary of the Congress and as the mover of the resolution in the Subjects Committee and in the open Congress to explain its significance. The resolution was not conceived in haste. The subject has been discussed at length in the country for some years and has repeatedly come up before the Congress in various forms. Several provincial Congress committees have adopted it in the past. The mover of the resolution and many others have written repeatedly in Indian and foreign periodicals and addressed numerous gatherings on the subject. Nor was the resolution passed by the Subjects Committee thoughtlessly or in a hurry. It was discussed for about three hours, and more than a dozen long speeches were delivered for and against it.

The resolution, as passed, is quite clear. Complete national independence is a correct legal definition of an independent country. It necessarily involves severance of the British connection as it exists; but it does not mean that there should be no alliance between India and England or any other country. It does not necessarily mean any ill will to Britain; but it does mean that the question of alliances only arises after independence. Independence also obviously and very specially means the withdrawal of the alien army of occupation in India. There can be no freedom of any kind with a foreign army occupying India as it does in Egypt, controlling and suppressing the nation's activities. The Congress, therefore, demands the withdrawal of the army, as was made clear in the speeches on the resolution. The defence of India can be entrusted to an Indian army, which can have foreign experts as officers if necessary under the control of a National Government.

Independence has been declared as our goal. This does not and cannot mean that there are intermediate goals before independence is reached. Whether it is realizable soon or not depends on the strength of the nation. If

[1] Statement to the Press, New Delhi, 12 January 1928. *The Tribune*, 14 January 1928. JN Papers, NMML.

[2] The 'Independence Resolution' was moved by Jawaharlal Nehru in December 1927 at the Madras session of the Indian National Congress.

the national movement remains weak it will not be realized. Achievement can only come when the strength to achieve is present. But whether we are strong or weak, the Congress has made it clear that the only goal we are striving for is independence, which naturally involves severance of the British connection and full control over our defence forces and our foreign policy.

8

They Have Dared[1]

It is announced in the public press that the Lucknow university authorities have invited Sir John Simon and his undistinguished crew to the university convocation. I do not know who these authorities are, but every school boy knows that India has resented the appointment and the coming of the Simon Commission and has boycotted it. Has no whisper of this reached the academic ears of the Lucknow University authorities? Have they not heard or felt in their boudoirs the deep rumble of a nation in anger? Do they not know how one of the greatest of India's sons was treated in Lahore city less than a month ago because he would not bow his head to this Commission which the authorities of Lucknow university have invited? What was his greatness worth or the love that millions of his countrymen bore him before the baton of an insolent policeman? Only a few days ago his great and generous heart pulsated with life and the warm blood throbbed through his veins, and with untiring energy his rich mind worked for the emancipation of his country and all who were oppressed in it. And then, his body lay cold and stiff and the valiant spirit that had inhabited it for four and sixty years had gone. Today that body is dust and ashes. We are told by his doctors that his death was hastened by the blows received by him when he led his fellow citizens to protest against the Simon Commission. And yet the authorities of Lucknow have invited this Commission to their convocation! And yet, they have dared!

Young men and women of Lucknow, what say you to this infamous and insolent challenge? Is the honour of your country nought that it can be kicked in the dust by a policeman clad in the livery of our alien rulers? But the poor policeman was but an instrument in other hands. What of your university authorities who of their own free will dare to honour those whom the nation has repudiated and boycotted? What of them and their attempt to exploit your university for the glorification of the Simon Commission? This is the measure of their nationalism, of their love of India and her honour. This is the tribute they pay to the memory of Lajpat Rai. Will you too forget soon this fragrant memory and this shining example?

[1] Message to the students of Lucknow, November 1928. AICC File No. G-73/1928, p. 3, NMML.

They have dared! What dare you? Will you not make it clear to your university authorities, to the Simon Commission, and to all whom it may concern, that the young men and young women of Lucknow cherish the memory of their departed leader and stand for the cause for which he lived and died? That they stand for the boycott of the Simon Commission and will not permit anyone to exploit them on behalf of the enemies of Indian freedom. Will you not take full part in the boycott demonstrations in Lucknow, and, above all, boycott the convocation to which your university authorities have invited the Simon Commission?

They have dared! Do you also dare?

Jawaharlal Nehru

9

Lahore Congress[1]

For four-and-forty years this National Congress has laboured for the freedom of India. During this period it has somewhat slowly but surely awakened national consciousness from its long stupor and built up the national movement. If today we are gathered here at a crisis of our destiny, conscious of our strength as well as of our weakness, and looking with hope and apprehension to the future, it is well that we give first thought to those who spent their lives with little hope of reward so that those that follow them may have the achievement. Many of the giants of old are not with us and we of a later day, standing on an eminence of their creation, may often decry their efforts. That is the way of the world. But none of you can forget them or the great work they did in laying the foundations of a free India. And none of us can ever forget that glorious band of men and women who, without reckoning the consequences, have laid down their young lives or spent their bright youth in suffering and torment in utter protest against a foreign domination. Many of their names are not even known to us. They laboured and suffered in silence without any expectation of public applause, and by their heart's blood they nursed the tender plant of India's freedom. While many of us temporized and compromised, they stood up and proclaimed a people's right to freedom and declared to the world that India, even in her degradation, had the spark of life in her, because she refused to submit to tyranny and serfdom. Brick by brick has our national movement been built up, and often on the prostrate bodies of her martyred sons has India advanced. The giants of old may not be with us, but the courage of old is with us still, and India can yet produce martyrs like Jatin Das[2] and Wizaya.[3]

This is the glorious legacy that we have inherited, and you wish to put me in charge of it. . . .

India today is a part of the world movement. Not only China, Turkey, Persia and Egypt, but also Russia and the countries of the West are taking part

[1] Presidential address at the Lahore session of the Indian National Congress, 29 December 1929. JN Papers, NMML. Excerpts.

[2] Jatindranath Das (1904–29); member of the Revolutionary Party; arrested, 14 June 1929 for complicity in the Lahore Conspiracy case; died on 13 September 1929 after 63 days of hunger strike.

[3] A Buddhist monk of Burma who was imprisoned on a charge of sedition and who died after a prolonged hunger strike on 19 September 1929.

in this movement, and India cannot isolate herself from it. We have our own problems, difficult and intricate, and we cannot run away from them and take shelter in the wider problems that affect the world. But if we ignore the world, we do so at our peril. Civilization today; such as it is, is not the creation or the monopoly of one people or nation. It is a composite fabric to which all countries have contributed and then have adapted to suit their particular needs. And if India has a message to give to the world, as I hope she has, she has also to receive and learn much from the messages of other peoples.

When everything is changing it is well to remember the long course of Indian history. Few things in history are more amazing than the wonderful stability of the social structure in India which withstood the impact of numerous alien influences and thousands of years of change and conflict. It withstood them because it always sought to absorb them and tolerate them. Its aim was not to exterminate but to establish an equilibrium between different cultures. Aryans and non-Aryans settled down together recognizing each other's right to their culture, and outsiders who came, like the Parsis, found a welcome and a place in the social order. With the coming of the Muslims the equilibrium was disturbed, but India sought to restore it, and largely succeeded. Unhappily for us, before we could adjust our differences, the political structure broke down, the British came and we fell.

Great as was the success of India in evolving a stable society, she failed in a vital particular, and because she failed in this, she fell and remains fallen. No solution was found for the problem of equality. India deliberately ignored this and built up her social structure on inequality, and we have the tragic consequences of this policy—millions of our people who till yesterday were suppressed and had little opportunity for growth. . . .

I have no love for bigotry and dogmatism in religion, and I am glad that they are weakening. Nor do I love communalism in any shape or form. I find it difficult to appreciate why political or economic rights should depend on the membership of a religious group or community. I can fully understand the right to freedom in religion and the right to one's culture, and in India specially, which has always acknowledged and granted these rights, it should be no difficult matter to ensure their continuance. We have only to find out some way whereby we may root out the fear and distrust that darken our horizon today. The politics of a subject race are largely based on fear and hatred; and we have been too long under subjection to get rid of them easily.

I was born a Hindu, but I do not know how far I am justified in calling myself one or in speaking on behalf of Hindus. But birth still counts in this country, and by right of birth I shall venture to submit to the leaders of the Hindus that it should be their privilege to take the lead in generosity. Generosity is not only good morals, but is often good politics and sound expediency. And it is inconceivable to me that in free India the Hindus can ever be powerless. So far as I am concerned I would gladly ask our Muslim and Sikh friends

to take what they will without protest or argument from me. I know that the time is coming soon when these labels and appellations will have little meaning and when our struggles will be on an economic basis. Meanwhile it matters little what our mutual arrangements are, provided only that we do not build up barriers which will come in the way of future progress. . . .

We are weary of strife and hunger for peace and opportunity to work constructively for our country. Do we enjoy the breaking up of our homes and the sight of our brave young men going to prison or facing the halter? Does the worker like going on strike and losing even his pittance and starving? He does so by sheer compulsion when there is no other way for him. And we who take this perilous path of national strife do so because there is no other way to an honourable peace. But we long for peace, and the hand of fellowship will always be stretched out to all who may care to grasp it. But behind the hand will be a body which will not bend to injustice and a mind that will not surrender on any vital point.

With the struggle before us the time for determining our future constitution is not yet. For two years or more we have drawn up constitutions, and finally the All Parties Committee put a crown to these efforts by drawing up a scheme of its own which the Congress adopted for a year. The labour that went to the making of this scheme was not wasted, and India has profited by it. But the year is past and we have to face new circumstances which require action rather than constitution-making. Yet we cannot ignore the problems that beset us and that will make or mar our struggle and our future constitution. We have to aim at social adjustment and equilibrium, and to overcome the forces of disruption that have been the bane of India.

I must frankly confess that I am a socialist and a republican, and am no believer in kings and princes, or in the order which produces the modern kings of industry, who have greater power over the lives and fortunes of men than even the kings of old, and whose methods are as predatory as those of the old feudal aristocracy. I recognize, however, that it may not be possible for a body constituted as is this National Congress, and in the present circumstances of the country, to adopt a full socialistic programme. But we must realize that the philosophy of socialism has gradually permeated the entire structure of society the world over, and almost the only points in dispute are the pace and the methods of advance to its full realization. India will have to go that way, too, if she seeks to end her poverty and inequality, though she may evolve her own methods and may adapt the ideal to the genius of her race.

We have three major problems—the minorities, the Indian States and labour and peasantry. I have dealt already with the question of minorities. I shall only repeat that we must give the fullest assurance by our words and deeds that their culture and traditions will be safe.

The Indian States, even for India, are the most curious relics of a bygone age. Many of their rulers apparently still believe in the divine right of kings—

puppet kings though they be—and consider the State and all it contains to be their personal property, which they can squander at will. A few of them have a sense of responsibility and have endeavoured to serve their people, but many of them have hardly any redeeming feature. It is perhaps unjust to blame them, for they are but the products of a vicious system, and it is the system that will ultimately have go. One of the rulers has told us frankly that even in case of war between India and England he will stand for England and fight against his mother country.[4] That is the measure of his patriotism. It is not surprising, then, that they claim, and their claim finds acceptance with the British Government, that they alone can represent their subjects at any conference, and no one, even of their subjects, may have any say. The Indian States cannot live apart from the rest of India, and their rulers must, unless they accept their inevitable limitations, go the way of others who thought like them. And the only people who have a right to determine the future of the States must be the people of those States, including the rulers. This Congress which claims self–determination cannot deny it to the people of the States. Meanwhile, the Congress is perfectly willing to confer with such rulers as are prepared to do so, and to devise means whereby the transition may not be too sudden. But in no event can the people of the States be ignored.

Our third major problem is the biggest of all. For India means the peasantry and labour, and to the extent that we raise them and satisfy their wants, will we succeed in our task. And the measure of the strength of our national movement will be the measure of their adherence to it. We can only gain them to our side by our espousing their cause, which is really the country's cause. The Congress has often expressed its goodwill toward them, but beyond that it has not gone. The Congress, it is said, must hold the balance fairly between capital and labour and zamindar and tenant. But the balance has been and is terribly weighted on one side, and to maintain the *status quo* is to maintain injustice and exploitation. The only way to right it is to do away with the domination of any one class over another. The All India Congress Committee accepted this ideal of social and economic change in a resolution it passed some months ago in Bombay. I hope the Congress will also set its seal on it, and will further draw up a programme of such changes as can be immediately put in operation.

In this programme perhaps the Congress as a whole cannot go very far today. But it must keep the ultimate ideal in view and work for it. The question is not one merely of wages and charity doled out by an employer or landlord. Paternalism in industry or in the land is but a form of charity with all its sting and its utter incapacity to root out the evil. The new theory of trusteeship, which some advocate, is equally barren. For trusteeship means that the power for good or evil remains with the self-appointed trustee, and he may exercise it

[4] Ganga Singh of Bikaner.

as he will. The sole trusteeship that can be fair is the trusteeship of the nation and not of one individual or a group. Many Englishmen honestly consider themselves the trustees for India, and yet to what a condition have they reduced our country!

We have to decide for whose benefit industry must be run and the land produce food. Today the abundance that the land produces is not for the peasant or the labourer who work on it; and industry's chief function is supposed to be to produce millionaires. However golden the harvest and heavy the dividends, the mud huts and hovels and nakedness of our people testify to the glory of the British empire and of our present social system.

Our economic programme must, therefore, be based on a human outlook and must not sacrifice man to money. If an industry cannot be run without starving its workers, then the industry must close down. If the workers on the land have not enough to eat, then the intermediaries who deprive them of their full share must go. The least that every worker in field or factory is entitled to is a minimum wage which will enable him to live in moderate comfort and humane hours of labour which do not break his strength and spirit. . . .

But industrial labour is only a small part of India, although it is rapidly becoming a force that cannot be ignored. It is the peasantry that cry loudly and piteously for relief, and our programme must deal with their present condition. Real relief can only come by a great change in the land laws and the basis of the present system of land tenure. We have among us many big landowners, and we welcome them. But they must realize that the ownership of large estates by individuals, which is the outcome of a state resembling the old feudalism of Europe, is a rapidly disappearing phenomenon all over the world. Even in countries which are the strongholds of capitalism the large estates are being split up and given to the peasantry who work on them. In India also we have large areas where the system of peasant proprietorship prevails, and we shall have to extend this all over the country. . . .

All these are pious hopes till we gain power, and the real problem, therefore, before us is the conquest of power. We shall not do so by subtle reasoning or argument or lawyers' quibbles, but by the forging of sanctions to enforce the nation's will. To that end this Congress must address itself. . . .

We have conspiracy cases going on in various parts of the country. They are ever with us. But the time has gone for secret conspiracy. We have now an open conspiracy to free this country from foreign rule and you, comrades, and all our countrymen and countrywomen are invited to join it. But the rewards that are in store for you are suffering and prison, and, it may be, death. But you shall also have the satisfaction that you have done your little bit for India, the ancient but ever young, and have helped a little in the liberation of humanity from its present bondage.

Vande Mataram.

10

The Dandi March[1]

"Inqilab zindabad! Inqilab zindabad!" Loud the shouts rang out in conference and meeting hall, and the echo answered, *"Inqilab zindabad"*. The young men and women of India were indeed awake and they thundered out their welcome to revolution and the will to do and die. Who could doubt the meaning of this cry? And who was not filled with enthusiasm at this great awakening and resolve? India was going to be free. The youths had decided it.

And today the pilgrim marches onward on his long trek.[2] Staff in hand, he goes along the dusty roads of Gujarat, clear-eyed and firm of step, with his faithful band trudging along behind him. Many a journey he has undertaken in the past, many a weary road traversed. But longer than any that have gone before is this last journey of his, and many are the obstacles in his way. But the fire of a great resolve is in him, and surpassing love of his miserable countrymen. And love of truth that scorches, and love of freedom that inspires. And none that passes him can escape the spell, and men of common clay feel the spark of life. It is a long journey, for the goal is the independence of India and the ending of the exploitation of her millions.

The pilgrim marches onward. And whither go you, young men and women of India, who shouted so loudly and so lately of independence and *inqilab*? Whither go you? Were your brave cries all in vain and your shouting a mere cloak for the cowardice in your hearts? The field of battle lies before you, the flag of India beckons to you, and freedom herself awaits your coming. Do you hesitate now, you who were but yesterday so loudly on her side? Is the examination hall or the counting-house dearer to you than India's freedom? Will you be mere lookers-on in this glorious struggle and see your best and bravest face the might of a great empire which has crushed your country and her children? What shall it profit you to get your empty degrees and your mess of pottage if the millions starve and your motherland continues in bondage? Who lives if India dies? Who dies if India lives?

[1] Written on 24 March 1930. *Young India*, 3 April 1930.

[2] Mahatma Gandhi started on the Salt Satyagraha Movement on 12 March 1930. Jawaharlal Nehru was arrested on 14 April.

11

To the Youth of Bengal[1]

The days of truce are numbered and it is only a question of weeks or days when we give it a decent burial. When the fight is resumed, the underlying basis of the last year's movement will have to be adopted once again. I do not want you to be vegetables; I want you to be live men going headlong for the joy there is in working for a great ideal. Personally, I would exchange a place in the Cabinet for the joy I experienced last year while fighting for the national cause.

Soon after the Lahore Congress the country was gradually being prepared for a direct and definite action. Many of us were apprehensive but many of us were also optimistic about the final outcome of the last year's movement. Soon after the salt satyagraha was started by Mahatma Gandhi, many of us thought that it was ludicrous to challenge the mighty empire. There was loud laughter at high places of the government. But that laughter did not last long. Those who took part in the movement heard it as if the noise came from a distant wave. The noise disturbed many of us, but at the same time it found an echo in many a heart; a noise that became louder and louder until it sounded like a big roar. It was a call given by the entire country. Many of us had heard it but had not tried to know how this came about. Such moments come when the vast masses of a country move to perform some heroic action. Many of us, therefore, while taking part in the great civil disobedience movement last year, realized what the real joy of life was.

I want the young men of Bengal to be live men who can act when the time comes just as you acted last year. The movement during then was not confined to certain classes or groups of people but it had permeated all classes and communities in India.

Another aspect of the movement has been that quite unintentionally it has tried to remove numerous social evils that we are suffering from. That it is a live movement, has affected our social customs, in particular, it has affected our womenfolk, is evident from the participation of women. The emancipation of women in the last movement was not our objective but the movement swept along with it the evil system of *purdah* and seclusion of women. Many women

[1] Calcutta, 19 November 1931. From *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 20 November 1931. SWJN, Vol. 5, pp. 300–2.

took charge of the movement and directed it. Men did not feel ashamed to follow them.

If you visit the rural areas you will realize how last year's movement had penetrated into the peasantry who had suffered for long from a variety of evils. No doubt they are the most exploited people of India but none the less they are affected by the movement. Of course, the ultimate solution of their problems depends on the final solution of the Indian question. Still, they could not but have gained something from the national struggle. The movement has therefore affected the whole domain of Indian life. It has affected them culturally, politically, socially and in a variety of other ways. When the urge for freedom becomes apparent, it develops itself in all its aspects.

The movement has affected us yet in another way. There was a time and not so long ago, when an Indian was not given due respect in foreign countries. Today, the situation has changed. He is now respected when he goes out of this country. We may still be slaves in our country. Our position is perhaps worse because of the new ordinances; still an Indian carries with him something of the glory of the last year's struggle when he is in a foreign land. Now the real power is not with the government but with the people. We are definitely nearer Swaraj as a result of the last year's fight. Our main concern should be how to develop our strength so that we are in a better position to face our enemies and make them realize the futility of confronting us.

12

Ballyhoo[1]

Those early months of 1932 were remarkable, among other things, for an extraordinary exhibition of ballyhoo on the part of the British authorities. Officials, high and low, shouted out how virtuous and peaceful they were, and how sinful and pugnacious was the Congress. They stood for democracy while the Congress favoured dictatorships. Was not its President called a dictator? In their enthusiasm for a righteous cause they forgot trifles like Ordinances, and suppression of all liberties, and muzzling of newspapers and presses, imprisonment of people without trial, seizure of properties and monies, and the many other odd things that were happening from day to day. They forgot also the basic character of British rule in India. Ministers of Government (our own countrymen) grew eloquent on how Congressmen were 'grinding their axes'—in prison—while they laboured for the public good on paltry salaries of a few thousand rupees per month. The lower magistracy not only sentenced us to heavy terms but lectured to us in the process, and sometimes abused the Congress and individuals connected with it. Even Sir Samuel Hoare, from the serene dignity of his high office as Secretary of State for India, announced that though dogs barked the caravan moved on. He forgot for the moment that the dogs were in gaol and could not easily bark there, and those left outside were effectively muzzled.

Most surprising of all, the Cawnpore Communal Riots were laid at the door of the Congress. The horrors of these truly horrible riots were laid bare, and it was repeatedly stated that the Congress was responsible for them. As it happened, the Congress had played the only decent part in them, and one of its noblest sons lay dead,[2] mourned by every group and community in Cawnpore. The Karachi session of the Congress, immediately on hearing of the riots, appointed an Enquiry Committee, and this Committee made a most exhaustive enquiry. After many months of labour, it issued a voluminous report, which was promptly proscribed by the Government, and printed copies were seized and, I suppose, destroyed. This attempt to suppress the results of an enquiry

[1] From *An Autobiography*, pp. 325–7.

[2] Leading Congressman of Punjab, Lajpat Rai was severely beaten and died on 18 November 1928

has not prevented our official critics and the British-owned Press from repeating from time to time that the riots were due to Congress work. No doubt, in this and other matters, the truth will prevail in the end, but sometimes the lie has a long start.

> When all its work is done, the lie shall rot;
> The truth is great and shall prevail,
> When none cares whether it prevails or not.

It was all very natural, I suppose, this exhibition of a hysterical war mentality, and no one could expect truth or restraint under the circumstances. But it did seem to go beyond expectation, and was surprising in its intensity and abandon. It was some indication of the state of nerves of the ruling group in India, and of how they had been repressing themselves in the past. Probably the anger was not caused by anything we had done or said, but by the realization of their own previous fear of losing their empire. Rulers who are confident of their own strength do not give way in this manner. The contrast between this picture and the other was very marked. For on the other side silence reigned, not the silence of voluntary and dignified restraint, but the silence of prison and of fear and an all-pervasive censorship. But for this enforced gagging, no doubt the other side would have also excelled in hysterical outbursts and exaggeration and abuse. One outlet, however, there was—unauthorized news sheets which were issued in various towns from time to time.

The British-owned Anglo-Indian newspapers in India joined in this game of ballyhoo with gusto, and gave utterance and publicity to many a thought which perhaps they had nurtured and repressed in secret for long. Ordinarily they have to be a little careful of what they say, for many of their readers are Indians, but the crisis in India swept away these restraints and gave us a glimpse of the minds of all, English and Indian alike. There are few Anglo-Indian newspapers left in India; one by one they have dropped out. Several of those that remain are high-class journals, both in the news they supply and their general get-up. Their leading articles on world affairs, though always representing the conservative view-point, are able and show knowledge and grasp. Undoubtedly as newspapers they are probably the best in India. But on Indian political problems there is a sudden fall, and their treatment of them is amazingly one-sided; and, in times of crisis, this partiality often becomes hysteria and vulgarity. They represent faithfully the Government of India, and the continuous propaganda they do for it has not the merit of being unobtrusive.

Compared to these selected few Anglo-Indian newspapers, the Indian newspapers are usually poor stuff. Their financial resources are limited, and there is little attempt on the part of their owners to improve them. They carry on their day-to-day life with difficulty, and the unhappy editorial staff has no

easy time. Their get-up is poor, their advertisements often of the most objectionable kind, and their general attitude to life and politics sentimental and hysterical. Partly, I suppose, this is due to the fact that we are a sentimental race; partly because the medium (of the English newspapers) is a foreign tongue and it is not easy to write simply and, at the same time, forcefully. But the real reason is that all of us suffer from any number of complexes due to long repression and subjection, and every outlet is apt to be surcharged with emotion.

Among the Indian-owned English newspapers, *The Hindu* of Madras is probably the best, so far as get-up and news service are concerned. It always reminds me of an old maiden lady, very prim and proper, who is shocked if a naughty word is used in her presence. It is eminently the paper of the bourgeois, comfortably settled in life. Not for it is the shady side of existence, the rough and tumble and conflict of life. Several other newspapers of moderate views have also this 'old maiden lady' standard. They achieve it, but without the distinction of *The Hindu* and, as a result, they become astonishingly dull in every respect.

It was evident that the Government had long prepared its blow, and it wanted it to be as thorough and staggering as possible right at the beginning. In 1930 it was always attempting, by fresh Ordinances, to catch up an ever-worsening situation. The initiative remained then with the Congress. The 1932 methods were different, and Government began with an offensive all along the line. Every conceivable power was given and taken under a batch of all-India and provincial Ordinances; organizations were outlawed; buildings, property, automobiles, bank accounts were seized; public gathering and processions forbidden, and newspapers and printing presses fully controlled. On the other hand, unlike 1930, Gandhiji was definitely desirous of avoiding civil disobedience just then, and most of the members of the Working Committee thought likewise. Some of them, including myself, thought that a struggle was inevitable, however much we disliked it, and should therefore be prepared for, and in the United Provinces and the Frontier Province a growing tension had directed people's minds to the approaching conflict.

13

Whither India?[1]

Many people ask: What are we to do? The mouths of most of those who could answer, or help in framing the answer, are shut either in prison or outside. But free advice, often accompanied by threats, comes to us in an unending stream from those who rule us and their faithful followers in this land. They warn us and threaten us and cajole us and offer us good advice by turns, anxious to influence us and yet uncertain of the right approach to us. Let us leave them and their advice for the moment; such gifts, even when free, are apt to be suspect.

Right action cannot come out of nothing; it must be preceded by thought. Thought which is not meant to lead to action has been called an abortion; action which is not based on thought is chaos and confusion. It is worthwhile therefore to clear our minds of all the tangled webs that may have grown there, to forget for the moment the immediate problems before us, the difficult knots we have to unravel, the day-to-day worries, and go back a little to basic facts and principles. What exactly do we want? And why do we want it? . . .

Never in the long range of history has the world been in such a state of flux as it is today. Never has there been so much anxious questioning, so much doubt and bewilderment, so much examining of old institutions, existing ills and suggested remedies. There is a continuous process of change and revolution going on all over the world, and everywhere anxious statesmen are almost at their wits' end and grope about in the dark. It is obvious that we are a part of this great world problem and must be affected by world events. And yet, judging from the attention paid to these events in India, one would not think so. Major events are recorded in the news columns of papers but little attempt is made to see behind and beneath them, to understand the forces that are shaking and reforming the world before our eyes, to comprehend the essential nature of social, economic and political reality. History, whether past or present, becomes just a magic show with little rhyme or reason, and with no lesson for us which might guide our future path. On the gaily-decked official stage of India or England phantom figures come and go, posing for a while as great statesmen; Round Tablers flit about like pale shadows of those who created them, engaged in pitiful and interminable talk which interests few and affects an even smaller number. Their main concern is how to save the vested interests

[1] Published as a series of articles in the Indian press on 9, 10 and 11 October 1933 and later reprinted as a pamphlet. SWJN, Vol. 6, pp. 1–16. Excerpts.

of various classes or groups; their main diversion, apart from feasting, is self-praise. Others, blissfully ignorant of all that has happened in the last half a century, still talk the jargon of the Victorian Age and are surprised and resentful that nobody listens to them. Even the Nasmyth hammer of war and revolution and world change has failed to produce the slightest dent on their remarkably hard heads. Yet others hide vested interests under cover of communalism or even nationalism. And then there is the vague but passionate nationalism of many who find present conditions intolerable and hunger for national freedom without clearly realizing what form that freedom will take. And there are also here, as in many other countries, the usual accompaniments of a growing nationalism—an idealism, a mysticism, a feeling of exaltation, a belief in the mission of one's country, and something of the nature of religious revivalism. Essentially all these are middle class phenomena . . .

Again whose freedom are we particularly striving for, for nationalism covers many sins and includes many a conflicting element. . . . Nothing is more absurd than to imagine that all the interests in the nation can be filled in without injury to any. A currency policy may be good for creditors and debtors, not for both at the same time. Inflation, resulting in a reduction or even wiping off of debts, will he welcomed by all debtors and by industry as a rule, but cursed by bankers and those who have fixed incomes. Early in the nineteenth century, England deliberately sacrificed her agriculture for her rising industry. A few years ago, in 1923, by insisting on keeping the value of the pound sterling at par she sacrificed, to some extent, her industry to her banking and financial system, and faced industrial troubles and a huge general strike.[2]. . .

We may take it that the average person does not like conflict and continuous tension; he prefers peace and quiet, and is even prepared to sacrifice much for it. But the ostrich-like policy of refusing to see a conflict and a disorder which not only exist but are eating into society's vitals, to blind oneself to reality, will not end the conflict and the disorder or suddenly change reality into unreality; for a politician or a man of action such a policy can only end in disaster. It is therefore essential that we keep this in mind and fashion our idea of freedom accordingly. We cannot escape having to answer the question, now or later: for the freedom of which class or classes in India are we especially striving for? Do we place the masses, the peasantry and the workers first, or some other small class at the head of our list? Let us give the benefits of freedom to as many groups and classes as possible, but essentially whom do we stand for, and when a conflict arises whose side must we take? To say that we shall not answer that question now is itself an answer and taking of sides, for it means that we stand by the existing order, the status quo.

[2] The British government adopted a deflationary policy to protect the value of the pound sterling. In 1923 the governments' attempt to introduce a protective tariff to help British industries was foiled by the bankers and financiers leading to labour unrest.

The form of government is after all a means to an end; even freedom itself is a means, the end being human well-being, human growth, the end of poverty and disease and suffering and the opportunity for everyone to live the 'good life', physically and mentally. What the 'good life' is, is a matter we cannot go into here, but most people will agree that freedom is essential to it—national freedom so far as the nation is concerned, personal freedom so far as the individual is concerned. For every restriction and inhibition stops growth and development and produces, apart from economic disorders, complexes and perversions in the nation and individual. So freedom is necessary. Equally necessary is the will and the capacity for cooperation. Modern life grows so complex, there is so much interdependence, that cooperation is the very breath that keeps it functioning. . . .

The great revolutionary nationalist urge in Asia of the after-war years gradually exhausted itself for the time being and conditions stabilized themselves. In India this took the form of the Swarajist entry into the Assembly and the Councils. In Europe also the middle nineteen-twenties was a period of settling down and adaptation to the new conditions created by the World War. The revolution that had hovered all over Europe in 1919 and 1920 failed to come off and receded into the background. American gold poured into Europe and revived to some extent the war-weary and disillusioned peoples of that continent and created a false appearance of prosperity. But this prosperity had no real basis and the crash came in 1929 when the United States of America stopped lending money to Europe and South America. Many factors, and especially the inherent conflicts of a declining capitalism, contributed to this crash, and the house of cards of after-war capitalist prosperity began to tumbledown. That process of tumbling down has been going on at a tremendous pace for four years and there is no end to it yet. It is called the slump, trade depression, the crisis, etc., but it is really the evening of the capitalist system and the world is being compelled by circumstances to recognize this. International cooperation has failed, the world market which was the essential basis of capitalism is disappearing, and each nation is trying frantically to shift for itself at the cost of others. Whatever the future may bring, one thing is certain: that the old order has gone and all the king's horses and all the king's men will not set it up again.

As the old capitalist order has tottered, the challenge to it by the growing forces of labour has grown more intense. This challenge, when it has become dangerous, has induced the possessing classes to sink their petty differences and band themselves together to fight the common foe. This has led to fascism and, in its milder forms, to the formation of so-called national governments. Essentially, these are the last-ditch efforts of the possessing classes, or the "kept classes" as they have been called by an American economist, to hold on to what they have. The struggle becomes more intense and the forms of nineteenth-century democracy are discarded. But fascism or national governments offer no

solution to the fundamental economic inconsistencies of the present-day capitalist system and so long as they do not remove the inequalities of wealth and solve the problem of distribution, they are doomed to fail. Of the major capitalist countries the United States of America is the only place where some attempt is being made today towards lessening, to a slight extent, inequalities of wealth by state action. Carried to a logical conclusion, President Roosevelt's programme[3] will lead to a form of state socialism; it is far more likely that the effort will fail and result in fascism. England, as is her habit, is grimly muddling through and waiting for something to happen. Meanwhile she has derived considerable help from India's gold resources. But all this is temporary relief only and the nations slide downhill and approach the brink.

Thus, if we survey the world today, we find that capitalism, having solved the problem of production, helplessly faces the allied problem of distribution and is unable to solve it. It was not in the nature of the capitalist system to deal satisfactorily with distribution, and production alone makes the world top-heavy and unbalanced. To find a solution for distributing wealth and purchasing power evenly is to put an end to the basic inequalities of the capitalist system and to replace capitalism itself by a more scientific system.

Capitalism has led to imperialism and to the conflicts of imperialist powers in search for colonial areas for exploitation, for areas of raw produce and for markets for manufactured goods. It has led to ever-increasing conflicts with the rising nationalism of colonial countries, and to social conflicts with powerful movements of the exploited working class. It has resulted in recurrent crises, political and economic, leading to economic and tariff wars as well as political wars on an enormous scale. Every subsequent crisis is on a bigger scale than the previous one, and now we live in a perpetual state of crisis and slump and the shadow of war darkens the horizon.

And yet it is well to remember that the world today has a surfeit of food and the other good things of life. Terrible want exists because the present system does not know how to distribute them. Repeated international conferences have failed to find a way out because they represented the interests of vested interests and dared not touch the system itself. They grope blindly in the dark in their stuffy rooms while the foundations of the house they built are being sapped by the advance of science and economic events. Everywhere thinkers have recognized the utter inadequacy of the existing system, though they have differed as to the remedies. Communists and socialists point with confidence to the way of socialism and they are an ever growing power for they have science and logic on their side. In America a great stir was caused recently by the technocrats, a group of engineers who want to do away with money itself and

[3] Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882–1945); Democrat President of the U.S.A. 1938–45. The New Deal Programme tried to increase production, create employment and stabilize prices.

to substitute for it a unit of energy, an erg. In England the social credit theories of Major Douglas,[4] according to which the whole production of the nation will be evenly distributed to the whole population—a kind of "dividends for all"—find increasing acceptance. Barter takes the place of trade both in the domestic and the international market. The growth of these revolutionary theories even among the well-to-do classes, and especially the intellectuals, is in itself an indication of the tremendous change in the mentality that is taking place in the world. How many of us can conceive a world without money and with the invisible erg as its measure of value? And yet this is soberly and earnestly advocated not by wild agitators but by well-known economists and engineers.

This is the world background.

The Asiatic background is intimately related to this and yet it has its peculiar features. Asia is the main field of conflict between nationalism and imperialism. Asia is still undeveloped as compared to Europe and North America. It has a vast population which can consume goods if they had the necessary purchasing power to do so. To the hard pressed imperialist powers seeking frantically for areas of economic expansion, Asia still offers a field, though nationalism offers many obstructions. Hence the talk of a "push to Asia" to find an outlet for the surplus goods of the West and thus stabilize western capitalism for another period. Capitalism is a young and growing force in the East; it has not, as in India, wholly overthrown feudalism yet. But even before capitalism had established itself, other forces, inimical to it, have risen to challenge it. And it is obvious that if capitalism collapses in Europe and America it cannot survive in Asia.

Nationalism is still the strongest force in Asia (we can ignore for our present purpose the Soviet territories of Asia). This is natural as a country under alien domination must inevitably think first in terms of nationalism. But the powerful economic forces working for changing in the world today have influenced this nationalism to an ever increasing extent and everywhere it is appearing in socialist garb. Gradually the nationalist struggle for political freedom is becoming a social struggle also for economic freedom. Independence and the socialist state become the objectives, with varying degrees of stress being laid on the two aspects of the problem. As political freedom is delayed, the other aspect assumes greater importance, and it now seems probable, especially because of world conditions, that political and social emancipation will come together to some at least of the countries of Asia.

This is the Asiatic background.

In India, as in other Asiatic colonial countries, we find a struggle today between the old nationalist ideology and the new economic ideology. Most of us have grown up under the nationalist tradition and it is hard to give up the mental habits of a lifetime. And yet we realize that this outlook is inadequate,

[4] C.H. Douglas, 1879–1952.

it does not fit in with existing conditions in our country or in the world; there is a hiatus, a lag. We try to bridge this hiatus but the process of crossing over to a new ideology is always a painful one. Many of us are confused and perplexed today because of this. But the crossing has to be made, unless we are to remain in a stagnant backwater, overwhelmed from time to time by the wash of the boats that move down the river of progress. We must realize that the nineteenth century cannot solve the problems of the twentieth, much less can the seventh century or earlier ages do so.

Having glanced at the general background of Asia and the world we can have a clearer view of our own national problem. India's freedom affects each one of us intimately and we are apt to look upon it as a thing apart and unconnected with world events. But the Indian problem is a part of the Asiatic problem and is tied up with the problems of the world. We cannot, even if we will it, separate it from the rest. What happens in India will affect the world and world events will change India's future. Indeed it may be said that the three great world problems today are: the fate of capitalism, which means the fate of Europe and America, the future of India, and the future of China, and all these are interrelated.

India's struggle today is part of the great struggle which is going on all over the world for the emancipation of the oppressed. Essentially, this is an economic struggle, with hunger and want as its driving forces, although it puts on nationalist and other dresses.

Indian freedom is necessary because the burden on the Indian masses as well as the middle classes is too heavy to be borne and must be lightened or done away with. The measure of freedom is the extent to which this burden is removed. This burden is due to the vested interests of a foreign government as well as those of certain groups and classes in India and abroad. The achievement of freedom thus becomes a question, as Gandhiji said recently, of divesting vested interests.[5] If an indigenous government took the place of the foreign government and kept all the vested interests intact, this would not even be the shadow of freedom.

We have got into an extraordinary habit of thinking of freedom in terms of paper constitutions. Nothing could be more absurd than this lawyer's mentality which ignores life and the vital economic issues and can only proceed on the basis of the *status quo* and precedents. Too much reliance on past practice has somehow succeeded in twisting the lawyer's head backwards and he seems to be incapable of looking ahead. Even the halt and the lame go slowly forward; not so the lawyer who is convinced, like the fanatic in religion, that truth can only lie in the past.

[5] On 14 September 1933 Gandhi wrote, "I am also in whole-hearted agreement with you, when you say that without a material revision of the vested interests the condition of the masses can never be improved."

The Round Table scheme is almost as dead as Queen Anne and hardly deserves notice. It was not meant to give an iota of freedom to the Indian people; it sought to win over certain Indian vested interests to the British side and in this it succeeded. It answered, to the satisfaction of its votaries, the question I had formulated at the beginning of this essay: whose freedom are we striving for? It gave greater protection and assurance and freedom to the British vested interests in India. It was Home Rule for the Viceroy as Mr. Vithalbhai Patel said. It confirmed the interests of British capital and British services and, in some cases, gave them even more than they have now. It tried to perpetuate the alien military occupation of India. Further, it gave greater freedom and importance to the vested interests of the princes and the semi-feudal magnates. In brief, the whole scheme was meant for the protection and perpetuation of the numerous vested interests that exploit the Indian masses. Having done this useful and, to themselves, profitable piece of work, the originators of the scheme told us that autonomy was a costly affair and would mean the expenditure of many millions for each province! Thus not only were all the old burdens on the masses to be continued but many new ones were to be added. This was the ingenious solution discovered by the wise and learned men who foregathered at the Round Table Conference. Intent on protecting their class privileges they happened to forget the odd three hundred and fifty million people in India.

Even a child in politics can point out the folly of this procedure. The whole basis and urge of the national movement came from a desire for economic betterment, to throw off the burdens that crushed the masses and to end the exploitation of the Indian people. If these burdens continue and are actually added to, it does not require a powerful mind to realize that the fight must not only continue but grow more intense. Leaders and individuals may come and go; and they may get tired and slacken off; they may compromise or betray; but the exploited and suffering masses must carry on the struggle for their drill-sergeant is hunger. Swaraj or freedom from exploitation for them is not a fine paper constitution or a problem of the hereafter. It is a question of the here and now, of immediate relief. Roast lamb and mint sauce may be a tasty dish for those who eat it but the poor lamb is not likely to appreciate the force of the best of arguments which point out the beauty of sacrifice for the good of the elect and the joys of close communion, even though dead, with mint sauce.

India's immediate goal can therefore only be considered in terms of the ending of exploitation of her people. Politically, it must mean independence and the severance of the British connection, which means imperialist dominion; economically and socially it must mean the ending of all special class privileges and vested interests. The whole world is struggling to this end; India can do no less, and in this way the Indian struggle for freedom lines up with the world struggle. Is our aim human welfare or the preservation of class privileges and

the vested interests of pampered groups? The question must be answered clearly and unequivocally by each one of us. There is no room for quibbling when the fate of nations and millions of human beings is at stake. The day for palace intrigues and parlour politics and pacts and compromises passes when the masses enter politics. Their manners are not those of the drawing-room; we never took the trouble to teach them any manners. Their school is the school of events and suffering is their teacher. They learn their politics from great movements which bring out the true nature of individuals and classes, and the civil disobedience movement has taught the Indian masses many a lesson which they will never forget.

Independence is a much abused word and it hardly connotes what we are driving at. And yet there is no other suitable word and, for want of a better, we must use it. National isolation is neither a desirable nor a possible idea in a world which is daily becoming more of a unit. International and intra-national activities dominate the world and nations are growing more and more interdependent. Our idea and objective cannot go against this historical tendency and we must be prepared to discard a narrow nationalism in favour of world cooperation and real internationalism. Independence therefore cannot mean for us isolation but freedom from all imperialist control, and because Britain today represents imperialism, our freedom can only come after the British connection is severed. We have no quarrel with the British people, but between British imperialism and Indian freedom there is no meeting ground and there can be no peace. If imperialism goes from Britain we shall gladly cooperate with her in the wider international field; not otherwise.

British statesmen of the Liberal and Labour variety often point out to us the ills of a narrow nationalism and dwell on the virtues of what used to be known as the British Empire and is now euphemistically called the British Commonwealth of Nations. Under cover of fine and radical words and phrases they seek to hide the ugly and brutal face of imperialism and try to keep us in its embrace of death. Some Indian public men, who ought to know better, also praise the virtues of internationalism, meaning thereby the British Empire,, and tell us in sorrow how narrow-minded we are in demanding independence, in place of that wonderful thing (which nobody offers us) Dominion Status. The British, it is well known, have a remarkable capacity for combining their moral instincts with their self-interest. That is perhaps not unnatural, but it is remarkable how some of our own countrymen are taken in by this unctuous and hypocritical attitude. Even the light of day is wasted on those who keep their eyes shut. It is worth nothing however that the foreign policy of England has been the greatest stumbling-block to international cooperation through the League of Nations or otherwise. All the European and American world knows this but most of us, who look at foreign politics through English spectacles, have not grasped this fact yet. Disarmament, air-bombing, the attitude to the

Manchurian question,[6] are some of the recent witnesses to England's attitude. Even the Kellog-Briand Pact of Paris, which was to have outlawed war, was only accepted by England subject to certain qualifications and reservations regarding her empire, which effectively nullified the pact. The British Empire and real internationalism are as the poles apart and it is not through that empire that we can march to internationalism.

The real question before us, and before the whole world, is one of fundamental change of regime, politically, economically, socially. Only thus can we put India on the road to progress and stop the progressive deterioration of our country. In a revolutionary period, such as exists in the world today, it is foolish waste of energy to think and act in terms of carrying on the existing regime and trying to reform it and improve it. To do so is to waste the opportunity which history offers once in a long while. "The whole world is in revolution" says Mussolini. "Events themselves are a tremendous force pushing us on like some implacable will." Individuals, however eminent, play but a minor role when the world is on the move. They may divert the main current here and there to some slight extent; they may not and cannot stop the rushing torrent. And therefore the only peace that can endure is with circumstances, not merely with men.

Whither India? Surely to the great human goal of social and economic equality, to the ending of all exploitation of nation by nation and class by class, to national freedom within the framework of an international cooperative socialist world federation. This is not such an empty idealist dream as some people imagine. It is within the range of the practical politics of today and the near future. We may not have it within our grasp but those with vision can see it emerging on the horizon. And even if there be delay in the realization of our goal, what does it matter if our steps march in the right direction and our eyes look steadily in front. For in the pursuit itself of a mighty purpose there is joy and happiness and a measure of achievement.

[6] Japanese troops, guarding the South Manchurian Railway in accordance with treaty rights, used an explosion on the railway as an excuse for seizing the city of Mukden (18 September 1931). Within 5 months, despite the condemnation of the great powers and in defiance of the League of Nations, the Japanese had established control over the whole of Manchuria.

14

Earthquakes—Natural and Political[1]

Nature is often pitiless and cruel. It plays its pranks regardless of what happens to the millions of mites that crawl on the surface of the earth. We feel helpless and bow to it, or we combat it and try to control it, according to our temperaments and the measure of strength and will within us. But there are other earthquakes, human earthquakes, which are not caused by unthinking nature but by thinking men. Human masses, when their lot becomes unbearable, rise up and break up the order that enslaves them. And there are political earthquakes when a government, fearful for its existence, loses all self-control, all sense of perspective, all dignity, and begins to behave as a mob that has no clear purpose in view except that of destruction and the desire to revenge itself on its adversaries. It forgets even the main purpose of government—provision of security to those it claims to govern, and scenting danger everywhere, hits out blindly at all and sundry. If it is autocratic or despotic, it suffers all the more from that common disease of governments and individuals in power, paranoia. There is a famous Latin saying which applies to it at this stage of growth or decline.

Fifteen years ago we saw such an eruption on the part of the government in the Punjab and the world remembers Jallianwala Bagh and the 'crawling order' and the many other ferocious accompaniments of Martial Law. Soon followed the era of the Black and Tans in Ireland with their blood and reprisals. And now we see the Government in India again excelling itself in this manner in parts of Bengal. Chittagong and Midnapur, like Amritsar, have become black symbols of the working of imperialism and of the attempt to humiliate a great nation.

Do most of us realize, I sometimes wonder, the significance of what is happening in Midnapur and Chittagong? Or have our feelings been dulled and our sensibilities coarsened by the long and advancing tide of repression? The Great War with its bath of blood and its vast destruction of human life produced this result on the peoples of Europe. And it seems that some such process is at work in India today both among the rulers and the ruled. How else are we to explain these amazing occurrences in Bengal and their reactions on our people?

[1] 31 January 1934, Article published in *Vartman*, 6 February 1934. JN Papers, NMML. Excerpts.

It is a strange record worthy of preservation for an incredulous posterity. Because of the acts of certain odd individuals large military forces are brought from distant places; they occupy territories in a way no alien army occupied enemy land in war time. They treat almost the whole population as suspect and force even the boys and girls of tender age to go about with cards of identity of various hues with photographs attached. They limit the movements of the general population and even lay down the dress that must be worn. They turn out people from their houses at a few hours' notice. They close schools and treat their children en bloc as enemy persons. They force people, under various pains and penalties, to offer welcomes to themselves, and to salute the flag which has become the sign of humiliation to them. And those that disobey or refuse to bend have to suffer heavily for it and to face reprisals.

Not satisfied with all this, they have interned for a whole week the whole of the young Hindu population of Chittagong. Trains and steamers and motor traffic have been made to stop their usual functioning for a period, law courts have been closed for two days and Chittagong has been converted into a beleagured city or a vast prison. The week passed by, and then the period of internment for a large number of people was extended to a month. Surely these wholesale orders affecting the entire population can only be matched from the annals of the Inquisition, when William of Orange stood up as the champion of his people's freedom and Alba invoked the Inquisition to pass sentence on a whole people.

All this has taken place and yet the press hardly dares to say anything above a whisper lest laws and ordinances encompass its ruin. The press is largely a silent witness of these happenings; not so the high officials who wield for a day the magic wand of power. We have often enough admonitions and threats from them of a still more terrible future, of the new weapons that are continually being forged to suppress a hapless population. One of the most notable performances of this kind was the recent speech of the commissioner of Midnapur who unburdened himself at length and gave us a glimpse of his and his government's mind. That was a precious utterance which told us more of the way despotic governments function than all the professors and text-books could have done. I ventured to suggest in Calcutta that this speech of the commissioner should be widely distributed in pamphlet form so that people may know to what depths of vulgarity and bluster even a seemingly powerful government can sink when it has lost all moral hold on the people it governs.

But all this has not been enough. And now we are told of new laws extending the penalty of death for certain offences under the Indian Arms Act (apparently the carrying of unlicensed arms), for a still further muzzling of the press, so that the Indian press cannot publish anything at all disapproved by the local government. There must be no expression of undue concern or sympathy for detenus in detention camps or for convicts in the Andaman Islands. We may

not show that it matters to us in the least whether they live or die, whether they are ill or well, whether they are treated humanely or inhumanly. They have been hunted down and cast out of the human pale, and human considerations must not apply to such castaways.

We have been long used to the proscription of books. But this was not enough. In future not merely individual books but whole classes of literature, specified by the government are going to be proscribed. Why take the trouble to read and judge a book when it is far easier to stop the source at the base by condemning whole groups and classes of literature? The next step presumably should be to attack the root of the problem by declaring that all reading of books and newspapers, except those produced through government agencies, is illegal.

Determined to improve the morals of our youth, the government wants to arm its district magistrates with still wider powers to control and restrict the movements of young persons, even though such persons have done nothing to bring them in touch with the wide-flung net of the laws and ordinances. So the district magistrate must be empowered to take action as soon as he suspects that someone might keep bad company. And then again Government has to face a difficult problem. To send them to gaol, or to intern them, is the obvious way to treat those who look suspicious. But they become worse in gaol because of their association with other undesirables and to let them loose on society when they come out of prison would obviously be a risky business. Therefore the safest place for them is the prison or the detention camp, or at any rate their movements should be severely restricted.

Breaches of various orders apparently continue even though the penalty is two years' imprisonment. What can a government do except to increase the penalty? And so the proposed legislation increases the two years to seven years.

And finally the temporary repressive laws which were due to expire in 1935 are to be made permanent. This will no doubt be some consolation to those who grumble about the delay in the coming of the 'Reforms'. They will realize that the 'Reforms' are coming, if they have not already arrived.

There seems to be just one lacuna in these schemes of 'Reforms'. It is just possible that some people may be left out in spite of all the careful thought that has been given to the framing of the existing and the proposed legislation. Instead of a variety of laws and ordinances and orders and rules, it would be simpler to have one comprehensive enactment laying down that every Indian must consider himself as if he was in prison (C class), all schools and colleges to be abolished, all newspapers and books suppressed, and every morning we must all salute the Union Jack, divine service twice a day should consist of the singing of the British National Anthem, and the afternoon might be profitably devoted to listening to an inspiring address on the virtues of the British rule. This arrangement would have much to commend it. In these days of worldwide

depression and deficit budgets there would be much saving of money, the stoppage of educational and many other services and the employment of free labour by government. Many offices could also be combined in single individuals. Thus the district magistrate could also become the prison superintendent for the whole district.

Are we drifting to this? And is it not a mockery for us to talk of constitutions and All Parties Conferences and 'Reforms' and elections and the like when this grim tragedy faces us?

15

Faizpur Congress[1]

During the past eight months I have wandered a great deal in this vast land of ours and I have seen again the throbbing agony of India's masses, the call of their eyes for relief from the terrible burdens they carry. That is our problem; all others are secondary and merely lead up to it. To solve that problem we shall have to end the imperialistic control and exploitation of India. But what is this imperialism of today? It is not merely the physical possession of one country by another; its roots lie deeper. Modern imperialism is an outgrowth of capitalism and cannot be separated from it.

It is because of this that we cannot understand our problems without understanding the implications of imperialism and socialism. The disease is deep-seated and requires a radical and revolutionary remedy and that remedy is the socialist structure of society. We do not fight for socialism in India today for we have to go far before we can act in terms of socialism, but socialism comes in here and now to help us to understand our problem and point out the path to its solution, and to tell us the real content of the Swaraj to come. With no proper understanding of the problem, our actions are likely to be erratic, purposeless and ineffective.

The Congress stands today for full democracy in India and fights for a democratic state, not for socialism. It is anti-imperialist and strives for great changes in our political and economic structure. I hope that the logic of events will lead it to socialism for that seems to me the only remedy for India's ills. But the urgent and vital problem for us today is political independence and the establishment of a democratic state. And because of this, the Congress must line up with all the progressive forces of the world and must stand for world peace. . . . For us, and we think for the world, the problem of peace cannot be separated from imperialism, and in order to remove the root causes of war, imperialism must go. We believe in the sanctity of treaties but we cannot consider ourselves bound by treaties in the making of which the people of India had no part, unless we accept them in due course. The problem of maintaining

[1] Presidential address at Faizpur Congress, 27 December 1936. *Eighteen Months in India*, pp. 69–94. Excerpts.

peace cannot be isolated by us, in our present condition from war resistance. The Congress has already declared that we can be no parties to an imperialist war, and we will not allow the exploitation of India's manpower and resources for such a war. Any such attempt will be resisted by us.

The League of Nations has fallen very low and there are few who take it seriously as an instrument for the preservation of peace. India has no enthusiasm for it whatever and the Indian membership of the League is a farce, for the selection of delegates is made by the British Government. We must work for a real League of Nations, democratically constructed, which would in effect be a League of Peoples. If even the present League, ineffective and powerless as it is, can be used in favour of peace, we shall welcome it.

With this international background in view, let us consider our national problems. The Government of India Act of 1935, the new constitution, stares at us offensively, this new charter of bondage which has been imposed upon us despite our utter rejection of it, and we are preparing to fight elections under it. Why we have entered into this election contest and how we propose to follow it up has been fully stated in the election manifesto of the All India Congress Committee,[2] and I commend this manifesto for your adoption. We go to the legislatures not to cooperate with the apparatus of British imperialism, but to combat the Act and seek to end it, and to resist in every way British imperialism in its attempt to strengthen its hold on India and its exploitation of the Indian people. That is the basic policy of the Congress and no Congressman, no candidate for election, must forget this. Whatever we do must be within the four corners of this policy. We are not going to the legislatures to pursue the path of constitutionalism or a barren reformism.

There is a certain tendency to compromise over these elections, to seek a majority at any cost. This is a dangerous drift and must be stopped. The elections must be used to rally the masses of the Congress to the millions of voters and non-voters alike, to press forward the mass struggle. The biggest majority in a legislature will be of little use to us if we have not got this mass movement behind us, and a majority built on compromises with reactionary groups or individuals will defeat the very purpose of the Congress.

With the effort to fight the Act and as a corollary to it, we have to stress our positive demand for a constituent assembly elected under adult suffrage. That is the very corner-stone of the Congress policy today and our election campaign must be based on it. This assembly must not be conceived as something emanating from the British Government or as a compromise with British imperialism. If it is to have any reality, it must have the will of the people behind it and the organized strength of the masses to support it, and the power to draw up the constitution of a free India. We have to create that mass support for it through these elections and later through our other activities.

[2] See post, pp. 367–71.

The Working Committee has recommended to this Congress that a convention of all Congress members of all the legislatures, and such other persons as the Committee might wish to add to them, should meet soon after the elections to put forward the demand for the constituent assembly, and determine how to oppose, by all feasible methods, the introduction of the federal structure of the Act. Such a convention, which must include the members of the All India Congress Committee, should help us greatly in focusing our struggle and giving it proper direction in the legislatures and outside. It will prevent the Congress members of the legislatures from developing provincialism and getting entangled in minor provincial matters. It will give the right perspective and a sense of all-India discipline, and it should help greatly in developing mass activities on a large scale. The idea is full of big possibility and I trust that the Congress will approve of it.

Next to this demand for the constituent assembly, our most important task will be to oppose the federal structure of the Act. Utterly bad as the Act is, there is nothing so bad in it as this federation and so we must exert ourselves to the utmost to break this, and thus end the Act as a whole. To live not only under British imperialist exploitation but also under Indian feudal control, is something that we are not going to tolerate whatever the consequences. It is an interesting and instructive result of the long period of British rule in India that when, as we are told, it is trying to fade off, it should gather to itself all the reactionary and obscurantist groups in India, and endeavour to hand partial control to the feudal elements.

The development of this federal scheme is worthy of consideration. We are not against the conception of a federation. It is likely that a free India may be a federal India, though in any event there must be a great deal of unitary control. But the present federation that is being thrust upon us is a federation in bondage and under the control, politically and socially, of the most backward elements in the country.

The present Indian States took shape early in the nineteenth century in the unsettled conditions of early British rule. The treaties with their autocratic rulers, which are held up to us so often now as sacred documents which may not be touched, date from that period. . . .

This is a state of affairs which no nation, no people, can tolerate. We cannot recognize these old settlements of more than a hundred years ago as permanent and unchanging. The Indian States will have to fit into the scheme of a free India and their peoples must have, as the Congress has declared, the same personal, civil and democratic liberties as those of the rest of India.

Till recent years little was heard of the treaties of the States or of paramountcy. The rulers knew their proper places in the imperial scheme of things and the heavy hand of the British Government was always in evidence. But the growth of the national movement in India gave them a fictitious importance,

for the British Government began to rely upon them more and more to help it in combating this nationalism. The rulers and their ministers were quick to notice the change in the angle of vision and to profit by it. They tried to play, not without success, the British Government and the Indian people against each other and to gain advantages from both. They have succeeded to a remarkable degree and have gained extraordinary power under the federal scheme. Having preserved themselves as autocratic units, which are wholly outside the control of the rest of India, they have gained power over other parts of India. Today we find them talking as if they were independent and laying down conditions for their adherence to the federation. There is talk even of the abolition of the viceregal paramountcy, so that these States may remain, alone in the whole world, naked and unchecked autocracies which cannot be tampered with by any constitutional means. A sinister development is the building up of the armies of some of the bigger States on an efficient basis.

Thus our opposition to the federal part of the Constitution Act is not merely a theoretical one, but a vital matter which affects our freedom struggle and our future destiny. We have got to make it a central pivot of our struggle against the Act. We have got to break this federation.

Our policy is to put an end to the Act and have a clean slate to write afresh. We are told by people who can think only in terms of action taken in the legislatures, that it is not possible to wreck it, and there are ample provisions and safeguards to enable the Government to carry on despite a hostile majority. We are well aware of these safeguards; they are one of the principal reasons why we reject the Act. We know also that there are second chambers to obstruct us. We can create constitutional crises inside the legislatures, we can have deadlocks, we can obstruct the imperialist machine, but always there is a way out. The constitution cannot be wrecked by action inside the legislatures only. For that, mass action outside is necessary, and that is why we must always remember that the essence of our freedom struggle lies in mass organization and mass action.

The policy of the Congress in regard to the legislatures is perfectly clear; only in one matter it still remains undecided—the question of acceptance or not of office. Probably the decision of this question will be postponed till after the elections. At Lucknow I ventured to tell you that, in my opinion, acceptance of office was a negation of our policy of rejection of the Act; it was further a reversal of the policy we had adopted in 1920 and followed since then. Since Lucknow the Congress has further clarified its position in the election manifesto and declared that we are not going to the legislatures to cooperate in any way with the Act but to combat it. That limits the field of our decision in regard to offices, and those who incline to acceptance of them must demonstrate that this is the way to noncooperate with the Act, and to end it.

It seems to me that the only logical consequence of the Congress policy, as defined in our resolutions and in the election manifesto, is to have nothing to

do with office and ministry. Any deviation from this would mean a reversal of that policy. It would inevitably mean a kind of partnership with British imperialism in the exploitation of the Indian people, an acquiescence, even though under protest and subject to reservations, in the basic ideas underlying the Act, an association to some extent with British imperialism in the hateful task of the repression of our advanced elements. Office acceptance on any other basis is hardly possible, and if it is possible, it will lead almost immediately to deadlock and conflict. That deadlock and impasse does not frighten us; we welcome it. But then we must think in terms of deadlocks and not in terms of carrying on with the office.

There seems to be a fear that if we do not accept office, others will do so, and they will put obstacles in the way of our freedom movement. But if we are in a majority we can prevent others from misbehaving; we can even prevent the formation of any ministry. If our majority is a doubtful one then office for us depends on compromises with non-Congress elements, a policy full of danger for our cause, and one which would inevitably lead to our acting in direct opposition to the Congress mandate of rejection of the Act. Whether we are in a majority or in a minority, the real thing will always be the organized mass backing behind us. A majority without that backing can do little in the legislatures, even a militant minority with conscious and organized mass support can make the functioning of the Act very difficult.

We have put the constituent assembly in the forefront of our programme, as well as the fight against the federal structure. With what force can we press these two vital points and build up a mass agitation around them if we wobble over the question of office and get entangled in its web?

We have great tasks ahead, great problems to solve both in India and in the international sphere. Who can face and solve these problems in India but this great organization of ours, which has, through fifty years' effort and sacrifice, established its unchallengeable right to speak for the millions of India? Has it not become the mirror of their hopes and desires, their urge to freedom, and the strong arm that will wrest this freedom from unwilling and resisting hands? . . .

The real object before us is to build up a powerful joint front of all the anti-imperialist forces in the country. The Congress has indeed been in the past, and is the basis and pivot of united action. The active participation of the organized workers and peasants in such a front would add to its strength and must be welcomed. Cooperation between them and the Congress organization has been growing and has been a marked feature of the past year. This tendency must be encouraged. The most urgent and vital need of India today is this united national front of all forces and elements that are ranged against imperialism. Within the Congress itself most of these forces are represented, and in spite of their diversity and difference in outlook, they have cooperated and worked

together for the common good. That is a healthy sign both of the vitality of our great movement and the unity that binds it together. The basis of it is anti-imperialism and independence. Its immediate demand is for a constituent assembly leading to a democratic state where political power has been transferred to the mass of the people. An inevitable consequence of this is the withdrawal of the alien army of occupation.

These are the objectives before us, but we cannot ignore the present-day realities and the day-to-day problems of our people. These ever present realities are the poverty and unemployment of our millions, appalling poverty and an unemployment which has even the middle classes in its grip and grows like a creeping paralysis. The world is full of painful contrasts today, but surely nowhere else are these contrasts so astounding as in India. Imperial Delhi stands as the visible symbol of British power, with all its pomp and circumstance and vulgar ostentation and wasteful extravagance; and within a few miles of it are the mud huts of India's starving peasantry, out of whose meagre earnings these great palaces have been built, huge salaries and allowances paid. The ruler of a state flaunts his palaces and his luxury before his wretched and miserable subjects, and talks of his treaties and his inherent right to autocracy. And the new Act and constitution have come to us to preserve and perpetuate these contrasts, to make India safe for autocracy and imperialist exploitation. . . .

And so one problem runs into another and all together form that vast complex that is India today. Are we going to solve this by petty tinkering and patchwork with all manner of vested interests obstructing us and preventing advance? Only a great planned system for the whole land and dealing with all these various national activities, coordinating them, making each serve the larger whole and the interests of the mass of our people, only such a planned system with a vision and courage to back it, can find a solution. But planned systems do not flourish under the shadow of monopolies and vested interests and imperialist exploitation. They require the air and soil of political and social freedom.

These are distant goals for us today though the rapid march of events may bring us face to with them sooner than we imagine. The immediate goal—independence—is nearer and more definite, and that is why perhaps we escape, to a large extent, that tragic disillusion and hopelessness which affect so many in Europe.

We are apparently weak, not really so. We grow in strength, the empire of Britain fades away. Because we are politically and economically crushed, our civil liberties taken away, hundreds of our organizations made illegal, thousands of our young men and women always kept in prison or in detention camp, our movements continually watched by hordes of secret servicemen and informers, our spoken word taken down lest it offend the law of sedition, because of all this and more we are not weaker but stronger, for all this intense repression is

the measure of our growing national strength. War and revolution dominate the world and nations arm desperately. If war comes or other great crises, India's attitude will make a difference. We hold the keys of success in our hands if we but turn them rightly. And is it the increasing realization of this that has swept away the defeatist mentality of our people?

Meanwhile the general election claims our attention and absorbs our energy. Here too we find official interference, in spite of denial, and significant attempts to prevent secrecy of voting in the case of illiterate voters. The United Provinces have been singled out for this purpose and the system of coloured boxes, which will be used everywhere even has been ruled out for the U.P. But we shall win in these elections in spite of all the odds—state pressure, vested interest, money.

That will be but a little step in a long journey, and we shall march on with danger and distress as companions. We have long had these for our fellow-travellers and we have grown used to them and when we have learnt how to dominate them we shall also know how we dominate success.

16

The Choice Before Us[1]

In this grave hour when the fates of nations hang in the balance and world war threatens humanity, the people of India cannot remain passive spectators of the march of historic events. They stand to gain or lose from them, as do others and they have to decide how best to serve the cause of freedom that is dear to them. To wait on others to decide for them, or not to decide at all, is to prove unworthy of our historic destiny. All the peoples of the world desire peace, but individuals and those in power and authority are driving the world to terrible war even though they talk glibly of peace. The people of India are even more committed to the way of peace than other peoples. . . .

A negative attitude of protest or the mere enunciation of a principle is not enough when a positive policy and constructive action become necessary. Our movement long ago passed the stage of protest in our national affairs and we took to constructive action. In foreign affairs also we are passing that purely agitational stage and India's voice counts today and is listened to with attention in international gatherings. It becomes essential, therefore, that we should fashion our policy accordingly and link our national struggle with that policy.

Striving for national freedom, we have inevitably become anti-imperialists and have resisted not only foreign domination in India, but imperialism itself. We saw in fascism a development of and a more dangerous form of imperialism, and we condemned it. We looked upon the two as twin brothers which crushed freedom and prevented peace and progress. We realized that the conflict between fascism and imperialism on the one side and freedom and democracy on the other was worldwide, and gradually we ranged ourselves with the forces of progress and freedom. In Abyssinia, Spain and China we condemned imperialist and fascist aggression.

Fascism crushed all progressive elements and set up new standards in cruelty and inhumanity. It gloried in brutality and openly aimed at war. Imperialist powers talked in terms of democracy but aided and abetted fascism and helped it to grow. International morality decayed, all idea of collective action for peace was given up, and an unabashed gangsterism among nations

[1] Signed article written at London, 29 September 1938. *National Herald*, 6 October 1938. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, pp. 294–300. Excerpts.

grew up and was tolerated. Yet it was clear that only by collective action could the aggressor be stayed and peace maintained. A surrender to violence and aggression was no basis for peace, for the aggression and blackmail grew by every surrender and brought world war ever nearer. It was not difficult for this aggression to be checked and peace ensured if those powers who believed in peace acted together, for their strength was far greater than that of the fascist aggressor. But many of these very powers who talked of peace and democracy were imperialist and they sympathized with fascism and encouraged it.

The British Government has a special responsibility for the growth of fascism and thus for bringing war nearer. They tolerated aggression in Manchuria, took part in the betrayal of Abyssinia, and indirectly aided the fascist rebels in Spain. Their general policy was one of consistently encouraging fascism and Nazism. They did not succeed in Spain because the people of Spain refused to fall in with their wishes and fought with unsurpassed courage and determination for their freedom.

In Czechoslovakia the incredible happenings of the past few weeks have shown to what depths the British and French Governments can sink in their desire to increase the power and prestige of Nazi Germany at the cost of the destruction of democracy in central Europe and the coercion and dismemberment of a gallant and friendly state which had put faith in their word. This act of gross betrayal and dishonour did not even bring peace, but has brought us to the threshold of war. Yet peace was to be had for the asking by building up a joint peace front between England, France and Russia and other powers, which would have been too powerful for Nazi Germany to dare to challenge. The British Government refused to line up with Russia and made Hitler believe that he could deal with Czechoslovakia singly, with England and other powers looking on. They ignored Russia in all their negotiations and worked in alliance with Hitler for the crushing of Czechoslovakia. They preferred the risk of making Hitler dominant in Europe to cooperation with Russia in the cause of peace. Their class feelings and hatred of the new order in Russia were so great that everything else was subordinated to it. They gladly agreed, at the bidding of Hitler, to the termination of the alliance between Russia and Czechoslovakia and thus sought to isolate Russia. The next obvious step was a four-power pact between England, France, Germany and Italy, an alliance between imperialism and fascism in order to make the world safe for reaction and for the crushing of the progressive elements all over the world. But the overweening ambition of Hitler has come in their way and an outraged public opinion has cried halt. They have talked of peace, but have deliberately avoided the obvious way to peace, and every step they have taken has been an encouragement to Hitler to wage war.

They have arrived at the precipice from which, perhaps, retreat may be impossible, and yet there is not even now a marked change in their pro-fascist

policy. If war comes they will talk of democracy, but if they continue as governments they will still act in the imperialist–fascist way and betray that very democracy if they have the chance to do so. No one who has followed their activities in the past can doubt this or rely on them.

And yet, whether there is war or peace, the fate of Czechoslovakia is a vital matter to the world and to all who stand for democracy and freedom. The momentous struggle between fascism and anti-fascism is being and will be fought on this issue and the result of it must have far-reaching consequences. India must be vitally interested in it for it affects her own future. We cannot tolerate the defeat of democracy and the world domination of fascist-imperialism. Britain, perhaps preserving the outward forms of democracy, would then turn more definitely fascist; France may do likewise. If this grave danger threatens then no people or individuals can be neutral or onlookers, and we have to cast our full weight on the side of democracy, serving thereby the cause of our own freedom. Not to do so might help fascism and reaction.

Governments have power to shape a country's policy and to give it a right or wrong turn. But in moments of crisis, of war, and potential war, popular forces emerge and grow and make a vital difference. They change governments or compel them to act in a certain way. It is these progressive forces that we see growing up around us, and if the crisis develops into war or otherwise, they will grow all the more. We have to reckon with these forces, to welcome them and to cooperate with them. It is fear of these that has prevented the British Government from cooperating with the Soviet Union in ensuring peace and has made them seek alliance with the Nazis even at the cost of weakening their empire.

Yet there are obvious dangers with an imperialist and reactionary government exploiting for its own purposes in war time the slogan of democracy. Do we not have even now Hilter and Mussolini giving their approval to the principle of self-determination, choosing to forget what they have done and are doing to many of their own people? Have we forgotten the fine phrases and slogans used by the British Government during the last war? Obviously we cannot be taken in by phrases again and allow ourselves to be exploited for imperialist purposes. We cannot be parties to the horror and disillusion of the last war.

It is true that this very memory of the past will cling to us and be a constant reminder to us of what we should not do. It is true also that there is a greater realization of the issue today, a vaster mass consciousness, a greater vigilance among the people. The existence of the Soviet Union itself and the astonishing fight for democracy in Spain are significant. And yet who can say that vast numbers of people will not be misled again and their courage and sacrifice and idealism not exploited for base ends, leaving after the holocaust of war the same misery, the same injustice, imperialism and fascism?

How to avoid this terrible danger and yet how not to be a mere spectator when the most vital issues are at stake? It is a question most difficult to answer for every person who cares for freedom and democracy and world peace and order. For us in India the difficulty is no less. We sympathize with all our heart with Czechoslovakia in her struggle for freedom, we realize the world significance of it, the momentous consequences which flow from it. We want to help her in her struggle to the best of our ability, for thereby we help the cause of freedom and democracy throughout the world. We want to combat fascism. But we will not permit ourselves to be exploited by imperialism, we will not have war imposed upon us by outside authority, we will not sacrifice to preserve the old injustice or to maintain an order that is based on them. We will and cannot forget our own struggle for freedom. Slogans which may sound pleasant to the ear but have little reality behind them, or vague promises which have been broken often before, cannot determine our course of action. Will anyone dare to ask us to fight for democracy and deny us that democracy.

17

Congress Resolution on India and the War[1]

The Working Committee have given their most earnest consideration to the grave crisis which has overtaken Europe, resulting in war between Great Britain, France and Poland on the one side and Germany on the other. This war will inevitably have far-reaching consequences in India as well as all other countries, for the crisis is not of Europe only but of humanity and will not pass like other crises or wars leaving the essential structure of the present-day world intact. It is likely to refashion the world for good or ill, politically, socially and economically. The crisis is the inevitable consequence of the social and political conflicts and contradictions which have grown alarmingly since the last Great War, and it will not be finally resolved till these conflicts and contradictions are removed and a new equilibrium established. Vast forces are being let loose bringing horror and disaster in their train and with the possibility of a disintegration of civilization as we have known it. Yet there is also a promise of hope that out of this terrible catastrophe will emerge a new world order and a better dispensation for the nations and peoples of the world.

At this supreme crisis of history, no one who has to shoulder the responsibility of guiding the policies of a nation dare take a narrow view and endeavour to seek temporary advantage for a group or a people at the expense of humanity. Realizing this grave responsibility and with the supreme desire to further the cause of Indian freedom and a new and juster world order, where the nations cooperate with each other for the common good, the Working Committee have given earnest thought to the advice which they should give to the Indian people.

The Congress has repeatedly laid down the principles which should guide the nation in the event of war. It has expressed its entire disapproval of the ideology and practice of fascism and Nazism and their glorification of war and violence and the suppression of the human spirit. It has condemned the aggression

[1] First draft for the Working Committee was prepared by Jawaharlal Nehru, Wardha, 11 September 1939. The final version was passed on 14 September 1939. JN Papers, NMML.

in which they have repeatedly indulged and their sweeping away of well-established principles and recognized standards of civilized behaviour. It has seen in fascism and Nazism the intensification of the principle of imperialism against which the Indian people have struggled for these many years. The Working Committee must therefore unhesitatingly condemn the latest aggression of the Nazi Government in Germany against Poland and sympathize with those who resist it.

The Congress has further laid down that the issue of war and peace for India must be decided by the Indian people and no outside authority can impose this decision upon them, nor can the Indian people permit their resources to be exploited for imperialist ends. Any imposed decision, or attempt to use Indian resources for purposes not approved by them, will necessarily have to be opposed by them.

These are the principles which govern Congress policy and action, and the Working Committee regret to note that these principles have been ignored by the British Government in India, which has already announced certain decisions,[2] which affect India vitally, without the express consent of her people. If cooperation is desired in a worthy cause, the way of compulsion and imposition is not the way to obtain it, and the Committee cannot agree to the carrying out by the Indian people of orders issued by an external authority. Cooperation must be between equals by mutual consent for a cause which both consider to be worthy..

In view, however, of the pace of events during the past few days, which has often been swifter than the working of men's minds, the Committee desire to take no final decision at this stage, committing the nation to a definite policy, so as to allow for an elucidation of the issues at stake, the objectives aimed at, and the position of India in the present and the future. The people of India have faced great risks and willingly made great sacrifices in order to establish a free democratic state, and their sympathy is entirely on the side of democracy and freedom. For the furtherance of that cause they will gladly throw in their resources and all their goodwill.

The Committee are aware that the Governments of Great Britain and France have declared that they are fighting for democracy and to put an end to aggression. But the history of the recent past is full of examples showing a constant divergence between the spoken word, the ideals proclaimed, and the real motives and objectives. During the war of 1914–18 the declared war aims were the preservation of democracy, self-determination, and the freedom of small nations, and yet the very governments which solemnly proclaimed these entered into secret treaties embodying imperialist designs for the carving out

[2] On 3 September 1939, India was declared by the British Government to be in a state of war with Germany without consulting the legislature or the leaders of the principal parties.

of the Ottoman Empire.[3] While stating that they did not want any acquisition of territory, the victorious powers added largely to their colonial domains. The present European war is itself the result.

If the war is to defend the status quo, imperialist possessions, colonies, vested interests and privilege, then India can have no interest in it, for all this is the negation of democracy. If, however, the issue is democracy and a world order based on democracy, then India is intensely interested in it. The Committee is convinced that the interests of Indian democracy do not conflict with the interests of British democracy or of world democracy. But there is an inherent and ineradicable conflict between democracy in India and elsewhere and imperialism and fascism. If Great Britain fights for the maintenance and extension of democracy, then she must necessarily end imperialism and establish full democracy in India and let the Indian people exercise the right of self-determination by framing their own constitution.[4] As a free democratic state, India will gladly associate herself with other nations for mutual defence and economic cooperation.

The Working Committee has noted that many rulers of Indian States have offered their services and expressed their desire to support the cause of democracy in Europe. While appreciating their adherence to the democratic cause, the Committee would suggest that their first concern should be the introduction of democracy within their own States. It does not advance the cause of democracy if some of its champions are noted for preserving semi-feudal, autocratic regimes which are even more reactionary than the fascist regime which they condemn. The past year has exposed many horrors and the fullness of autocracy in many Indian States and the British Government in India has given its protection and support to these in spite of public protest and warning.[5] This policy is the very negation of democracy and of the new world order for which Great Britain is supposed to be fighting in Europe.

As the Working Committee views past events in Europe, Africa and Asia,

[3] Various secret conferences between the Allies and Turkey culminated in the Treaty of Sevres (10 August 1920) which liquidated the Ottoman Empire, abolished Turkish sovereignty and led to virtual control of the Turkish economy by the Allies.

[4] Linlithgow wrote to Zetland on 18 September 1939: "My own impression is . . . we have carefully avoided any suggestion that we are in the war to further or to defend democracy. . . . I see no reason why we should let ourselves become entangled in an academic argument about the merits or demerits of the principle of democracy, or the possible reactions on the position in India or in the colonies, to which I see also Nehru has referred, of our views on that abstract question. . . ."

[5] A resolution on Indian States was passed at the Haripura Congress in February 1938, encouraging individual Congressmen to render active support although Congress as a body could only offer moral support and sympathy; and at the Tirupuri session in March 1939 the Congress gave warning that it might abandon its policy of non-interference.

and more particularly past and present occurrences in India, they fail to see any attempt to advance the cause of democracy and self-determination, or any evidence that the present war declarations of the British Government are being acted upon. The Committee are eager and desirous of helping in every way in the struggle for democracy and for a new world order. But the measure of that democracy is the ending of imperialism and imperialist aggression. If present fascist aggression is to be ended, so also present and past imperialist aggression. Only on that firm basis can a new order be built up.

The Committee therefore invite the British Government to declare in clear terms what their war aims are in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that is envisaged, and how far these aims are going to be given effect to in the present in India and elsewhere. Such an unequivocal declaration, pledging the government to the ending of imperialism and fascism alike, will be welcomed by the peoples of all countries, and the immediate steps taken to that end will demonstrate that the declaration is meant to be honoured. In the infinite anguish of war, this pledge will bring some solace to those who suffer and sacrifice.

War has broken out in Europe and the prospect is terrible to contemplate. But war has been taking its heavy toll of human life during the past several years in Abyssinia, Spain and China. Innumerable innocent men, women and children have been bombed to death from the air in open cities; cold-blooded massacres, torture and utmost humiliation, and the killing of the human spirit, have followed each other in quick succession during these years of horror. That horror grows, and violence and the threat of violence shadow the world and, unless checked and ended, will destroy the precious inheritance of the past and bring back the Dark Ages to the world. That horror has to be checked in Europe and China, but it will not end till its root causes of imperialism and fascism are removed. To that end, if that is the end in view in the present war, the Working Committee is prepared to pledge its cooperation.

The Committee wishes to declare that the Indian people have no quarrel with the German people or the Japanese people or any other peoples. But they have a quarrel with systems which deny freedom and are based on violence and aggression. They look forward to no victory of one people over another or a dictated peace, but a victory of democracy for all the peoples of all countries and a world freed from the nightmare of violence and fascist and imperialist oppression.

The Working Committee are deferring their final decision and advice to the people to enable the British Government to clarify the issues mentioned above. In view of the gravity of the crisis, however, they earnestly appeal to the people to put an end to all internal controversies and conflicts and to keep in readiness, so that they might face the perils and dangers to come as a united

nation, calm of purpose and determined to achieve the freedom of India within the larger freedom of a world order.

Pending further directions, the Congress ministries should continue in office but they should not agree to any measure which is against Congress policy or which they consider detrimental to national interests.

18

War Aims and Peace Aims[1]

The statement issued by the Working Committee of the Congress has drawn public attention to certain aspects of the war situation which were sadly ignored. There was a tendency on the one hand to talk in terms of India rushing into the war without thought or aim or purpose, and on the other hand of vague resistance to war. Both these attitudes were negative attitudes which did not take into consideration the realities of the present situation and the numerous developments that have taken place in the world and in India. . . .

In India today the war is still a far-away affair, exciting enough, but something apart from us, affecting us little. This is not so in Europe and elsewhere, for there it is constant sorrow and misery, and imminent danger and death and destruction, and a tension that breaks the heart, for innumerable multitudes. There is no home in Europe which is free from this gnawing fear and this sinking of the heart, for the world they have known has come to an end, and horror has descended upon them, horror almost without end for themselves, for their dear ones, for much they have valued in life. Brave men and women, pawns in the hands of elemental forces which they cannot control, face the issue with courage, but the only hope that illumines their minds for a while is the hope of a better future for the world, so that their sacrifice may not have been in vain. . . .

Imperialism holds sway still in many parts of the world, and notably in India. And yet 1939 is not 1914. This quarter of a century has brought mighty changes in the world and in India, changes not so much in the outer structure, but in the minds of people and in their desire to change this outer structure and put an end to an order based on violence and conflict.

In India we are very different from what we were in 1914. We have gained strength and political consciousness and a capacity for united action. In spite of our manifold difficulties and problems, we are no weak nation today. Our voice counts to some extent even in international affairs. If we had been free we might have even succeeded in preventing this war. Sometimes the Irish analogy

[1] 21–23 September 1939. Editorials in the *National Herald*, 22–24 September 1939. Reprinted in *China, Spain and the War*, pp. 156–76. Also in *The Unity of India*, pp. 305–17. Excerpts.

is placed before us.[2] While we may learn much from Ireland and her struggle for freedom, we must remember that we are placed differently. Ireland is a small country which is geographically and economically tied to Britain. Even an independent Ireland cannot make much difference to world affairs. Not so India. A free India, with her vast resources, can be of great service to the world and to humanity. India will always make a difference to the world; fate has marked us for big things. When we fall, we fall low; when we rise, inevitably we play our part in the world drama.

This war is, as the Working Committee have said, the inevitable outcome of all manner of contradictions and conflicts in the present political and economic structure. But the immediate cause of the war is the growth and aggression of fascism and Nazism. Ever since the birth of Nazi Germany the Congress, with true insight, has condemned fascism and seen in it the intensification of the principle of imperialism. A series of resolutions testify to this judgement of the Congress. It is clear, therefore, that we must oppose fascism and a victory over fascism will be our victory also. But to us that victory has meaning only in the larger context of imperialism. We cannot score a victory over fascism by surrendering our freedom and the struggle to achieve it.

For us to bargain in the spirit of the market-place would ill serve our cause or suit India's dignity at a time of word peril. Our freedom is too precious to be bargained for but it is too precious also to be ignored or put aside because the world has gone awry. That freedom itself is the very basis and foundation of the world freedom that is proclaimed. If we participate in a joint effort for freedom, that effort must be really joint, based on consent as between free equals. Otherwise it has no meaning, no value. Even from the point of view of success in the war, that free joint participation is of importance. From the wider point of view of the objects which the war is supposed to achieve, our freedom is essential.

This, we hold, is the background of any consideration of the problem of war and peace aims.

II

What will be the end of the war? How long will it last? What will Soviet Russia do? Will Herr Hitler seek peace after crushing Poland? We do not claim to have an answer to these and many other questions, and those who seek to answer them have perhaps little justification for doing so. We are, however, convinced that this war, if it does not annihilate modern civilization, will revolutionize the present political and economic order. We cannot conceive of empires and imperialism continuing in the old way after the war. . . .

[2] In 1937 Ireland declared herself a sovereign state within the British Commonwealth, but the six northern counties remained part of the United Kingdom.

There are too many uncertainties in war for a prophecy to be made. Yet the human mind must look ahead and try to peep through the veil of the future. That future seems to indicate that the area of war will spread and more and more nations will be dragged in. It will in effect become a world war where neutrals hardly count, and it will go on year after year, destroying and killing and reducing the world to waste and ruin, till the common sense of war-worn humanity rebels against it and puts an end to it. . . .

Whatever the more fundamental reasons for the war, the conflicts between rival imperialism, the final cause was Nazi aggression. The last eighteen months of continuing Nazi aggression in central Europe have embittered vast numbers of people all over the world against Nazi Germany, which has become in their eyes the embodiment of evil in the international sphere. This is a powerful psychological factor in favour of the western Allies. In England and France it has resulted in absolute national unity in the prosecution of the war to the bitter end. It is unlikely that there is such unity in Germany where millions of people are enemies of the Nazi regime. Recent reports of internal trouble in Germany proper may be exaggerated, but such trouble is always likely, more especially if the war drags on and adds to the burdens and miseries of the people. It is certain that there will be continued trouble in Bohemia and Moravia and probably Slovakia. The people of Czechoslovakia, easily subdued because of their friends' betrayal, will take their revenge now.

All this indicates that in a long war—and the war is likely to be a long one—the scales will be heavily balanced in favour of the western Allies. But that advantage will be theirs only if their war and peace aims are for real freedom and democracy and self-determination, so that the peoples of the world may know and believe that the objective is worth the terrible price they pay. It is not for the continuation of imperialism that they will fight and make sacrifices. And it is the peoples of the world who will have the final say, not the governments that have misled them for so long. If governments do not fall in with their wishes, they will have to go and give place to others.

III

What are the professed war aims of the western Allies? We are told that they fight for democracy and freedom, for the ending of the Nazi regime and of Hitlerism, for the liberation of Poland. Mr. Chamberlain has added that Czechoslovakia must also be freed. We agree. But all this is not enough, and hence the importance of the invitation extended by the Working Committee to the British Government to state fully and unequivocally what their war and peace aims are.

Let us carry the argument further. If Hitlerism is to go, it necessarily follows that there should be no truce or pacts with any fascist power, even other than

Germany. It means that Japanese and Italian aggression should not be recognized, and our policy should be directed to assist China, in so far as we can, in her struggle for freedom. It means further that the policy applied to fascism should be extended to imperialism and both should be ended. In any event and even apart from international developments, we must have a free and independent India. But for the present we consider Indian freedom in its world context of imperialism. To condemn fascism and seek to defend or maintain imperialism is illogical and absurd. A world which has had enough of fascism cannot tolerate imperialism. It is thus an inevitable consequence of a struggle against fascism that imperialism should also be ended, or else the whole purpose of that struggle is vitiated and it becomes a contest for power between rival imperialisms.

A statement of war aims should thus include: the liberation of countries taken by Hitler, the ending of the Nazi regime, no truce or pacts with fascist powers, and the extension of democracy and freedom by the winding up of the imperialist structure and the application of the principle of self-determination. There should of course be no secret treaties, no conquests, no indemnities or reparations, no bargains over colonial areas. In the colonies also the principle of self-determination should be applied, and steps should be taken to democratize them. All discrimination based on race must go. We can admit no peace settlement over the bodies of colonial peoples.[3]

It is in no spirit of bargaining that we make these suggestions, nor is there the slightest desire to take advantage of another's difficulty. We sympathize with that difficulty, but that sympathy cannot make us forget our own difficulties and disabilities. If we desire the freedom of Poland or Czechoslovakia, much more do we desire the freedom of China, and it is not just narrow self-interest that induces us to give first place to the freedom of India. Freedom can have no meaning for us if we ourselves do not possess it, and it would be a hollow mockery if we shouted for the freedom of a distant land and submitted to subjection ourselves. But even looking at it from the point of view of the war, such freedom is essential, in order to make this a popular war which moves the people to courage and sacrifice for a cause which they consider theirs. As this war goes on from month to month and year to year, and weariness comes over the peoples of all countries, it is this urge to defend one's own hard-earned freedom that will tell in the end. The war will not be won by mercenary armies with mercenary motives, howsoever efficient they might be.

Coming to India, the first step to be taken by the British Government is

[3] Linlithgow wrote to Zetland on 30 September 1939: "I cannot think that the propositions he (Nehru) puts forward in the third of those articles as regards war aims and the type of declaration that is to be expected from His Majesty's Government hold out very encouraging prospects of agreement. . . . The lesson of the last war was a quite sufficient indication of the dangers involved in premature commitments and premature formation of objectives."

to make a public declaration of their recognition of India as a free and independent nation which can draw up her own constitution. We must recognize that this declaration cannot be given full effect immediately, but it is essential, as the Working Committee have pointed out, that it should be applied, in so far as is possible, in the present. For it is that application that touches the minds and hearts of the people and impresses the world. It is this present that will govern the conduct of the war and give it that vitality which can only come from the yoking of the popular will to a great task. Whatever we do must be of our free will and choice, and only then will the joint effort be really joint, for it will then be based on the free cooperation of partners in a common undertaking.

Unhappily, the British Government, as is its way, has taken action already which makes reasonable approach from us difficult. They passed the Government of India Act Amending Bill through the House of Commons in all its stages in exactly eleven minutes, though they knew full well that we were entirely opposed to it. Here in India legislation and ordinances have been similarly rushed through. The India Office and the Government of India still live in an age that is long past; they neither grow, nor learn nor remember. Even the shock of war has not had much effect on their mental processes or their ancient ways. They take India for granted, not realizing that nothing can be taken for granted in this cataclysmic age, much less India which, though quiet on the surface, is shaken by all manner of forces and vital urges.

Yet, in spite of this difficulty of approach, the Working Committee have, in the spirit of true statesmanship, stretched out their hand and offered their cooperation to the British people and all other people who struggle for freedom's cause. But India can only cooperate with dignity and freedom, or else it is not worth cooperation. Any other way is that of imposition and we can no longer endure this.

How and to what extent is it necessary and possible to give present application to Indian freedom? It is clear that whatever we do must be of our free will and based on our decision. In matters pertaining to the war there must be equality of action even though this cannot be put on the statute book. India may be technically at war but there is no war situation in this country and there is absolutely no reason why our normal legislative or judicial processes should be replaced by abnormal measures. These abnormal measures have been passed. They must remain dead letters and all necessary steps should be taken through the provincial legislature and the provincial governments. The Amending Act passed by the British Parliament should also remain a dead letter and in so far as the provincial governments are concerned their powers and activities should in no way be limited. Such limitations and safeguards as exist in the constitution should not be applied. So far there is little difficulty.

But it is essential that even during this interim period India's representatives should have effective control over the policies and activities in the centre in

regard to external affairs, armed forces, and financial matters. Only in this way can a policy based on real consent be carried through. For this purpose some *ad hoc* machinery will have to be devised. Amendments of the present Act are not desirable to bring this about. The Act will have to go as a whole when the constitution of India's making takes its place. Meanwhile effective interim arrangements can be made by consent.

It is clear that if India's war policy is to have popular backing and support, it must be carried on by popular representatives in whom the people have confidence. It is no easy matter to live down the prejudice of generations past and to make our people look upon the effort as their own. This can only be done by taking them into our confidence, by explaining our policies, and by convincing them that it is to their advantage as well as for the world's good. That is the way democracy functions. We shall have to know the larger policies governing the war also, so that we can justify them before our people and the world.

A war policy for a nation must inevitably first take into consideration the defence of that country. India must feel that she is taking part in her own defence and in preserving her own freedom as well as helping in the struggle for freedom elsewhere. The army will have to be considered a national army and not a mercenary force owing allegiance to someone else. It is on this national basis that recruitment should take place, so that our soldiers should not merely be cannon-fodder, but fighters for their country and for freedom. In addition to this it will be necessary to have a large-scale organization for civil defence on a militia basis. All this can only be done by a popular government.

Even more important is the development of industries to supply war and other needs. Industries must develop on a vast scale in India during war time. They must not be allowed to grow in a haphazard way but should be planned and controlled in the national interest and with due safeguards for workers. The National Planning Committee can be of great assistance in this work.

As the war progresses and consumes more and more commodities, planned production and distribution will be organized all over the world, and gradually a world planned economy will appear. The capitalist system will recede into the background and it may be that international control of industry will take its place. India, as an important producer, must have a say in any such control.

Finally, India must speak as a free nation at the peace conference.

We have endeavoured to indicate what the war and peace aims of those who speak for democracy should be, and, in particular, how they should applied to India. The list is not exhaustive, but it is a solid foundation to build upon, and an incentive for the great effort needed. We have not touched upon the problem of a reorganization of the world after the war, though we think some such reorganization essential and inevitable.

Will the statesmen and peoples of the world, and especially of the warring countries, be wise and far-seeing enough, to follow the path we have pointed out? We do not know. But here in India let us forget our differences, our leftism and rightism, and think of these vital problems which face us and insistently demand solution. The world is pregnant with possibilities. It has no pity at any time for the weak or the ineffective or the disunited. Today when nations fight desperately for survival, only those who are far-seeing and disciplined and united in action will play a role in the history that is being made.

19

A Popular War Must Have Popular Support[1]

The spell of violence and inhuman warfare holds Europe and threatens the fabric of civilization all over the world. Behind the clash of arms there is a deeper clash of ideas and aims and the future of the world hangs in the balance. History is being made not only on the battlefields but in the minds of men, and the vital question for all of us is whether that history is going to be different from that of past ages and whether this terrible war will makes an essential difference to human freedom and end the very causes of war and human degradation. To India with her thirst for freedom and horror of war and violence, this question is of paramount importance. She has reacted strongly against the philosophy and methods of fascism and Nazi aggression and brutality and seen in them the negation of all she stands for. World peace for her means freedom and democracy and the ending of the domination of one nation over another. So India condemned aggression in Manchuria, Abyssinia, Czechoslovakia, and was deeply distressed at events in Spain and the brutal Nazi invasion of Poland. India will therefore gladly throw in her resources for a new order of peace and freedom.

If this kind of peace is the objective, then war and peace aims must be clearly defined and action today must conform to them. Not to do so or to hesitate is to demonstrate that there are no clear aims and what is said vaguely is not meant seriously; it is to justify apprehensions of all who have learnt from bitter experience that wars overwhelm ideals and result in imperialisms fighting for mastery and entrenching themselves. If this war is for democracy and self-determination and against Nazi aggression, it cannot be fought for territorial annexations, indemnities or reparations, for keeping colonial peoples in subjection, and for maintaining the imperialist system.

For this urgent reason the Congress has invited the British Government to state its war and peace aims clearly and in particular how these apply to the imperialist order and to India. India can take no part in defending imperialism but she will join in a struggle for freedom. India's resources are vast but of even

[1] Cable to *News Chronicle*, London, 5 October 1939. *China, Spain and the War*, pp. 177–81.

greater value is goodwill and her moral support for a worthy cause. This is no small offer that India makes, for it means the ending of a hundred years hostility between India and England, a great turning point in world history and the real beginning of the new order we fight for. Only a free and equal India can cooperate of her free will in this task. Till that vital change is made none of us have the power to make the people of India enthusiastic for a war which is not theirs. A popular war must have popular support and people must realize what it means to them. An imposed war will inevitably be resented and rouse public feeling against it.

The whole background of generations of conflict and struggle for freedom in India must be borne in mind. Our present constitution itself has been imposed upon us and has kept hostility alive. This cannot go by vague assurances and half-hearted measures which will fail of their purpose. This historic opportunity must be seized by recognizing India as a free nation with the right to draw up her constitution and her charter of independence. Anything short of that will mean losing this opportunity and keeping alive the spirit of friction and hostility between India and England. It will mean that not only we in India but others doubt the sincerity of war and peace aims and there will be divergence between what is professed and what is done.

The first step must therefore be a declaration of India's full freedom. This has to be followed by its application now in so far as is possible in order to give the people effective control of the governance of India and the prosecution of war on India's behalf. Then only is it possible to create the psychological conditions which can lead to popular support. Autocratic and ordinance rule will alienate public sympathy and lead to conflict. Already difficulties are arising, public workers have been arrested and serve restrictions placed on public and labour activities in some parts of India. This is the old way which has failed in the past and is bound to fail again.

India wants to forget the past of conflict and wants to stretch out her hand in comradeship. But she can do so only as a free nation on terms of equality. She must be convinced that the past is over and we are all striving for a new order not only in Europe but also in Asia and the world. Her invitation to the British Government is not only on her behalf but for all those in the world who believe in peace and freedom and democracy. It will be tragedy for all of us if the deep significance of this gesture is not appreciated and full response not made to it. Such a response will hearten people all over the world and will be a greater blow to Nazism than a victory on the battlefield.

20

The Answer[1]

The Viceroy has spoken[2] and the British Government has given its answer to India's questions. What were those questions that the Congress put, not on behalf of itself only, not only on behalf of the hundreds of millions of Indians, but for vast numbers of human beings all over the world, who were sick and weary of war and violence, of fascism and imperialism and all their ugly and numerous progeny, and hungered for a new order and peace and freedom? "The working Committee invite the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims are in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that is envisaged, in particular, how these aims are going to apply to India and to be given effect to in the present. Do they include the elimination of imperialism and the treatment of India as a free nation whose policy will be guided in accordance with the wishes of her people?"

We have the answer now. The Viceroy "is authorized by His Majesty's Government to say that at the end of the war they will be very willing to enter into consultation with representatives of several communities, parties and interests in India and with the Indian princes with a view to securing their aid and cooperation in framing such constitutional modifications as may be deemed desirable." Further he announces the immediate establishment of a consultative group of all major political parties in British India and of the Indian princes which will associate public opinion with the conduct of the war. In order to comfort us still further, we are told that the pledge given in the preamble of the Act of 1919 still holds.[3]

[1] Lucknow, 17 October 1939. Editorial in the *National Herald*, 18 October 1939. Reprinted in *China, Spain and the War*, pp. 182–7.

[2] On 17 October 1939, the Viceroy announced that at the end of the war, Dominion Status would be granted and the Government of India Act modified to the extent deemed necessary by the British. As for self-government, the situation must be faced in terms of world politics, political realities and practical considerations.

[3] This declared that the policy of Parliament was "to provide for the increasing association of Indians in every branch of Indian administration, and for the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in British India as an integral part of the Empire."

We would hesitate ordinarily to comment in haste on these pronouncements for the gravest issues are at stake, and it is right and proper that India's rejoinder should be given by the Congress Working Committee. We presume that the Committee will meet soon and give the only lead to the country that seems possible now. But while it is our privilege to carry the message of the Congress to our readers, and to discipline ourselves and the nation in the pursuit of our objectives and ideals, we may not remain silent even for a day when a challenge has been thrown out to the Indian people, and to the ideals we have cherished for so long.

The last six weeks have seen the elimination of a nation from the map of Europe and the crushing of a proud people. That has been a major occurrence, full of tragedy, and yet it is but a minor prelude to the vast and cataclysmic changes that are taking place before our eyes. Hitler, who dreamed of dominion over Europe and possibly the world, has been compelled by force of circumstances to give up that dream and to submit to the superior might of Soviet Russia. The south-east of Europe lies beyond his reach now, the Baltic states and the Baltic Sea are dominated by Russia.[4] Half Poland has gone and Nazi Germany, with all her armed might, plays second fiddle and lives in fear of what may come.

This is the beginning, the first fruits of the war. What will follow in the months and years to come we can only dimly see now, but only the blind can imagine that the present-day world of empires and colonies and dependencies will survive the holocaust of war. The world of yesterday is dead, the world of today is dying and not all the king's horses nor all the king's men will be able to keep it alive. The new world may be good or bad, but it will be entirely different from the old.

Every man and woman of intelligence has some realization of these profound changes that are taking place in this era of war and revolution. But not so the British Government and not the Government of India. They live in Whitehall and New Delhi apart from humbler, though perhaps more intelligent folk, and they neither see nor remember. In 1939 they remind us of a preamble of the Act of 1919. For them these twenty years have been but a bad dream that is no more, and though the world may crash and go to pieces, who dare touch the sanctums of Whitehall or New Delhi? But we remember that even in 1919 the preamble was indignantly rejected by the Indian people, that three times since then we have faced the might of the British Empire, unarmed and peaceful and clad in simple homespun, but strong in the strength of our millions, and proud of the spirit of our people and of the ideals we cherished. We remember

[4] On 28 September 1939, the German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty was signed. It partitioned Poland between the two countries and gave the Soviet Union a free hand in the Baltic states. By 10 October 1939, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania had been induced to accept Russian garrisons at key points on their territories. They also entered into trade agreements with the Soviet Union.

that in 1935 yet another Act was imposed upon us and the old Act of 1919 was consigned to oblivion. This new Act also we rejected. And now the old preamble of 1919 is fished out of the dustbin and presented to us by His Excellency the Viceroy as a gift worthy of England, fighting for democracy, and worthy of India, insistent on independence.

Need we examine any other parts of the Viceroy's statement? We asked for independence and are promised a consultation at the end of the war for such constitutional modifications as may be deemed desirable.

Perhaps we were foolish in asking our questions. Yet we do not think so, for there is no one in India now, and few, we imagine, in the world who will be deceived by British professions of a war for democracy and freedom. We know now, beyond a peradventure, that Britain clings to her imperialism and fights to preserve it, howsoever her statesmen may cover this ancient habit of theirs by soft and pleasing words. What of the British Labour Party now and all those radicals and lovers of freedom in England who talk so eloquently of the brave new world that is coming? What of America, that great land of democracy, to which imperialist England looks for support and sustenance during this war? Does Britain think that the people of the United States will pour their gold and commodities to make the world safe for British imperialism? What of the free dominions of the British Commonwealth, who have been charmed by brave phrases and made to come to Britain's aid? How will they like this exposure of the reality that lies behind those phrases? The aims and objectives of this terrible war are clear at last, in so far as the present British Cabinet is concerned. Let no man doubt them.

The Congress asked a question, but in asking that question it also gave its own answer—that answer stands. We can never be parties to supporting imperialism. The issues are clear and so are we in our minds. This is not a matter for Congressmen only but for all of us, whether we belong to the Muslim League or Hindu Mahasabha or Sikh League or any other organization of Indians. For India's honour and India's freedom are involved and nothing else can count where these supremely vital issues are at stake.

The Viceroy has told us to think of the unity of India. His Excellency's reminder was not necessary. But even the unity of India cannot be purchased at the cost of India's freedom. We want a united India but a free India, and we have no shadow of doubt that we shall get what we want. Meanwhile we may have to go into the wilderness again, as we have so often done in the past. If the fates so will it, we shall do so gladly, rejoicing that yet again we have been privileged to serve the cause that is dearer to us than everything else. And in doing so we shall help in building the new world order for which millions crave—an order of peace and freedom from which fascism and imperialism have been eliminated, and the days of war and violence are no more.

21

Freedom is in Peril[1]

On innumerable walls and hoardings in London and all over England appears, in large letters, the legend: "Freedom is in Peril, Defend it with all your Might." This is the appeal of the British Government to their people, to join the war a nd give their lives for freedom's sake. For whose freedom? Not India's, we know, for we have been told so. Not the subject countries of British and other imperialisms, for England's rulers are discreetly silent on that issue, in spite of our invitation. Is it the freedom of Europe that England is fighting for, as Mr. Chamberlain has said? For what country in Europe, for what people? We seem to remember a country that once existed, called Czechoslovakia, "that far-away country about which we know to little", as the British Prime Minister said a year ago, and then proceeded to put an end to it. There was also once a gallant democratic republic in Spain, but she was stabbed to death by those who pretended to be her friends and paid lip service to democracy.

There is Poland, now no more. Will the old Poland rise again; does Mr. Chamberlain believe this or fight for it? Half of it knows a greater freedom today than she has ever experienced in the past, and her representatives speak in Moscow's Parliament. It is strange that while we in India talk interminably of constituent assemblies and constitutions, a war-ridden country emerges within a few weeks with a free constitution.

What does England fight for? For whose freedom does Mr. Chamberlain hanker? If it is English freedom, he is well entitled to appeal to his people. But Bernard Shaw and others have told us how freedom is rapidly disappearing under war-time regulations in England's green and pleasant island. The very fascism and authoritarianism that the English people have condemned in Germany creep over and numb their democratic faculties. England is no democratic country today and the imperialism she has nourished abroad is coming back to her in fascist grab.

How can we know what England is fighting for, for they will not tell us, even though we ask. But the passing show is there to enlighten us and give answer to our questions; and though official lips may be sealed, official acts display the intent behind them. We see imperialism in full play in war as in peace, and the ruling classes of Britain holding on to their dividends and vested

[1] 8 November 1939. Editorial in the *National Herald*, 9 November 1939. Reprinted in *China, Spain and the War*, pp. 237–41.

interests. They have no intention of losing their present freedom to add to their dividends at others' expense. It is for this freedom that Britain's rulers are fighting. It is for the defence of this that they summon the manhood and youth of their country, and want to summon our manhood also.

"His Majesty's Government", we are told by Lord Zetland,[2] "find it impossible to accept this position"—the position being the Congress demand that India be declared an independent nation and should frame her constitution, without external intervention, through a constituent assembly, based on the widest franchise and agreement in regard to communal representation, such assembly securing the protection of minority rights by agreement. So that is impossible and we are relieved to have a straight answer.

The Marquis of Zetland goes on to say that "the long standing British connection with India has left his Majesty's Government with obligations towards her which it is impossible for them to shed by disinteresting themselves wholly in the shaping of her future form of government". We ourselves vaguely thought that His Majesty's Government would not forget or ignore their obligations to British financial or industrial or other interests in India, and would sternly repress even their love for freedom when this came into conflict with those obligations. We are obliged to the noble Marquis for his statement and elucidation. Let there be no more talk of communal or other issues coming in the way of a declaration of Indian freedom. It is the City of London and all that it represents that bars the way, and noble lords and commoners carry out its will.

We are a little weary of long debates, and patronizing advice, and interviews, and all this game of covering and hiding the iron hand of imperialism. We prefer to see and face the reality. It is better to have autocratic rule in India and a suspension of the constitution than a mockery of freedom. It is better for us to be in the wilderness than to be tied up to chairs of office, prisoners of a constitution imposed upon us.

His Majesty's Government find it impossible to accept our position. We find it impossible to accept theirs, or indeed any position except that of a free nation. There we both stand, facing each other across a wide gulf that cannot be bridged. The future will decide between us, the future of war and revolutionary change. We shall not merely await that future but help to shape it. For the present let us accept the conflict of two apparent impossibilities, and think of and prepare for the future.

Meanwhile, may we accept for once the advice of Britain's Government and remind our own people that

> Freedom is in Peril!
> Defend it with all your Might.

[2] On 7 November 1939, at the House of Lords.

22

The Art of Adaplation[1]

It was the seventeenth July nineteen hundred and thirty-seven. There was bustle and apprehension in the corridors of the stately buildings which housed the Secretariats, where for so long red-coated chaprasis had guarded the sacred precincts. Tradition and routine were upset and no one knew exactly what to do, for a new species of human beings had invaded these halls reserved for the elect, and the vulgar throng accompanied them. They were all clad alike in simple homespun and all had the Gandhi caps perched on their heads. How was one to distinguish between the minister and the worker or the peasant? The old barriers crumbled and the corridors resounded with the vulgar tongue.

A sense of adventure filled the air and, through many a province in this land of ours, this excitement crept into the remotest villages and intoxicated the people. There was little enough to be excited about or intoxicated, but everywhere there was relief from the burden of the old and a glad welcoming of the new.

The old order has come back again for a while and the Secretariats have returned to their ancient routine. The corridors are silent; where there was life and energy and enthusiasm, today there is the hand of death. No midnight oil burns, no misplaced enthusiasm, no working overtime. The labourer is worthy of his hire. Let his price be high and let him not be overworked. There is tennis at four and the club afterwards to refresh him.

And so the new order gives place to the old and destiny fulfils herself in many ways, lest even good deeds might corrupt us and weaken our resolve. But many there are who have learnt the secret of nature's ways and the art of those fascinating animals who can adapt themselves to any shade or colour. They fit into the old and into the new, and back again into the old, and the colour changes with their changing environment. Like the brave and famous Vicar of Bray they might well say or sing:

> That whatsoever king shall reign,
> I will be the Vicar of Bray, Sir.

[1] Editorial in the *National Herald*, 9 November 1939.

23

Which Way? What Means?[1]

Again we are standing on the threshold of great happenings. Again our pulses quicken and our toes are aquiver, and the old call comes to our ears. We pack up our little troubles and store away our domestic worries, for what do they matter when that call comes to make us forget all else, when India, whom we have loved and sought to serve, whispers to us and casts her magic spell on our little selves?

Yet some are impatient and in the pride of their youth they make accusations. Why this delay? Why do we go slow when the blood tingles in our veins, and life calls to us to march? Do not worry, young manhood and womanhood of India, do not fret or grow impatient. The time will come all too soon, when you will have to shoulder this heavy burden; the call to march will also come and the pace may be swifter than you imagine. For the pace is set today by a world rushing headlong into the unknown future, and none of us, whether we wish it or not, can stand when the very ground shakes underneath our feet.

The time will come. May it find us ready, stout of heart and swift of limb, and calm of mind and purpose. May we know well then the path we have to travel so that no doubts might assail us, no divided counsels weaken our resolve.

We know our goal, our objective, our heart's desire. Of that there need be no further argument. But what of the way we have to travel, the methods we adopt, the means that govern our actions? Surely that too is not a matter for argument; for long years we have blazed the trail and fashioned the way so that others may follow on the well-trodden path. Twenty years ago many might have doubted the efficacy of this straight and narrow way, but today we have long experience to guide us, our own successes and failures to teach us. In spite of attempts to divert us from it, we have stuck to it with a firmer resolve, and the millions of India have understood its significance and efficacy and are wedded to it as never before. The Congress continues to declare its firm faith in it; for it there is no other way.

And yet it is necessary that we do not take too much for granted, and that

[1] 15 November 1939. Article in the *National Herald*, 17 November 1939. Reprinted in *China, Spain and the War*, pp. 228–36. Also in *The Unity of India*, pp. 352–6. Excerpts.

in this hour of destiny we examine afresh its implications and accept them with all our heart and mind. This is no time for theory or idle speculation; action awaits us and action demands concentration of mind and effort, and cannot permit the philosophy of doubt or the luxury of debate in the midst of action. Much less can it permit individuals or groups neutralizing that very action by their contrary methods, and by their challenging the very roots of that action.

It is necessary that we examine this question frankly and come to clear and final decisions, for a new generation has arisen which has no roots in our past experience and speaks a different language, and some there are who openly or secretly, and from even the shelter of our organization, express contempt for our methods and means. It may be, as we well believe, that these doubters and dissidents are few and cannot make much difference to a vast nation-wide movement. But it is possible that they might produce confusion in many minds and lead to happenings which injure our cause. Therefore there must be clarity and decision. We can take no unnecessary risks in the struggle ahead of us.

Nineteen years ago the Congress adopted nonviolence as its method of action and in these years that have passed we have experimented with it on many an occasion. We impressed the world, but what is more important, we impressed ourselves and drew amazing strength from what we did and how we did it. The old choice of a subject people—submission or violent revolt—no longer applied to us. We had a potent weapon, the value of which grew with our growing strength and understanding of it. It was a weapon which might be used anywhere, but it was peculiarly suited to the genius and present condition of India. Our own example is there to justify it and to comfort and cheer us. But world events during the past few years have demonstrated the futility and brutality of the methods of violence.

Few of us, I suppose, can say that the era of violence is over or is likely to end soon. Today violence flourishes in its intensest and most destructive and inhuman form, as never before. Yet its very virulence is a sign of its decay. It will die or it will kill a good part of the world.

> The sword, as ever, is a shift of fools
> To hide their folly.

But we live in an age of folly and madness and our rulers and those who govern human affairs are the true products of this age. From day to day we face this terrible problem: how to resist violent aggression? For the alternative is often no other than meek submission and surrender to evil.

The way of violence and armed might is only feasible today, even in the narrowest interpretation of immediate success, when the armed forces are clearly superior to those opposed to them. Otherwise there is surrender without a fight or a collapse after the briefest of struggles, bringing utter defeat and demoralization in their train. Petty violence is completely ruled out as it has not

even the virtue of holding out a bare possibility of success, and it brings all the horrors of defeat and disruption.

What the future will bring to India is beyond our ken. If that future is still one of armed national forces, it is difficult for most of us to conceive of a free India without a national army and all the other apparatus for defence. But we need not consider that future now. We have to deal with the present.

24

Prudence or Courage?[1]

There comes a time in the life of every individual, as well as every country, when great decisions have to be made, risks have to be taken, perils have to be faced, so that greater perils may be avoided, and fulfilment of that individual's or nation's objective achieved. If that individual is strong enough to take that decision, he marches ahead with self-confidence and self-assurance, and a sense of fulfilment fills his being; otherwise he joins the throng of the helpless and the dispirited, the cantankerous and those who are always complaining against others. If that nation takes that great decision, it has already justified itself in its own eyes and the eyes of others and strength and greatness come to it as the day follows the night. But if it is afraid of taking that vital step, and doubts and hesitates, and lingers while the world marches on, it sinks into insignificance, without honour and respect, abroad or at home.

Such a time came to us twenty years ago and, under the inspiration of a great leader, we threw the balanced calculations of careful politicians to the winds and made direct appeal to the millions of our people. We took risks gladly, not caring for the consequences, and found joy and strength in our combined endeavour. Out of that tussle and conflict between a nation's soul and a foreign dominating power, modern India took shape. It was a very different India that emerged. The old cringing slavish India was no more and a self-reliant people, conscious of their strength, now faced the world.

We had many failings and weaknesses still and during periods of reaction these became only too evident. Inner weaknesses crept in, communalism spread and spoke and acted in terms of vulgarity and indecency which corrupted our public life. Yet not even this fall from grace could take away that strength and cohesion which we had evolved.

We face again that psychological moment when great decisions have to be made. And not only we but every nation in the world. England, with the greatest stake of all, had this choice before her. For several years her policy had been bereft of statesmanship and she had drifted to disaster. Even when this war began, it was just possible for her to give a moral basis to her case by willingly

[1] Article in the *National Herald*, 28 July 1940. Excerpts.

giving up her imperialism and really standing for human freedom. We offered her, in all sincerity, the chance to do so. She rejected it.

It was a brave offer that we made, for it is no easy matter to put an end to the hostility of a hundred and seventy years between India and England. Yet we offered to do so, but the only conceivable basis was the independence of India. Months have passed since then and the sands of time have run out. Perhaps it is already too late now and destiny must take its course.

France fell because, in the ultimate analysis, it had a fascist government. England with an imperialist government can never put forward that strength which a great step towards establishing human freedom could have given her. But we realize fully that such considerations are beyond the ken of Simla or Whitehall. They think that they can hold India by force and compel her cooperation. They think very wrongly.

And yet England has shown in her past history a capacity to adapt herself to changing circumstances. Campbell-Bannerman[2] and his Government had the courage to confer freedom on their enemies of the Boer War. In the Irish Treaty of 1921 also the British Government showed vision and statesmanship, though they did not go so far as they might have done. But that vision and statesmanship have been singularly lacking these many years, and today in India have ceased to be so far as the British Government is concerned. The talk addressed to us is petty, selfish, irritating talk which has no relation with reality. That reality demands a liquidation of imperialism itself and the independence of India.

Everyone knows that the British Empire cannot survive. Everyone knows that India must and will be free. And yet they seek to preserve what is doomed to end; they try to hold on to something which already slips from their grasp. They imagine that they can postpone a decision, or allow matters to drift, thinking that India is quiescent, and though resentful, will not show this resentment in action. They allow, as they have so often done in the past, the right moment to pass when the courage to make a great decision was necessary. Those who miss these moments, do so at their peril.

[2] Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman (1836–1908); British Prime Minister, 1905–8; after the Boer War achieved a settlement by which responsible government was granted to the Transvaal and the Orange Free State in 1907.

25

Khadi[1]

Gandhi Jayanti is here again and the stormy seas surround us and the skies are full of thunder. And yet again the captain of our ship at the helm beckons us and we get ready to embark and face the tempest and the angry waves. So, buckle on your armour of khadi, get ready for the voyage, for the distant shore beckons. With stout hearts and strong arms and this livery of freedom, we shall cross the stormy seas and reach the haven of our desire. Put on khadi, therefore, this livery of freedom, and tell the world that you are also a champion of India's independence. Put on khadi and stretch out your hands in fellowship to your brother, the kisan. Put on khadi and thus give a birthday gift to our captain and leader, a pledge and a token that you are also a fellow brother to Swaraj.

[1] Message. *The Hindustan Times*, 17 September 1940. JN Papers, NMML.

26

Individual Satyagraha[1]

I have been told that the charge against me is based on the reports of three speeches I delivered in the Gorakhpur district early in October last. Copies of these reports, and in one case a translation into English, have been given to me. I have read these and I cannot congratulate the persons who were responsible for the reporting. These reports, though presumably taken down in shorthand, are scrappy and incomplete, confusing and often making little sense. I am a lover of words and phrases and try to use them appropriately. Whatever my opinions might be, the words I use are meant to express them intelligibly and in ordered sequence. A reader of these reports will find little intelligence or sequence in them, and is likely to obtain an entirely distorted impression of what I actually said. . . .

It is not necessary to go to garbled reports to find out what I or other Congressmen say in regard to India and the war. The Congress resolution and statements, carefully and precisely worded, are there for all the world to know. By those resolutions and statements I stand, and I consider it my duty to take the message of the Congress to the people of India.

As a matter of fact, ever since the Congress came to the conclusion that, in order to give effect to the Congress policy, satyagraha or civil disobedience should be started, I have endeavoured to check myself in my utterances and to avoid what might be termed satyagraha. Such was the direction of our chief, Mahatma Gandhi, who desired that satyagraha should be confined to particular persons of his choice. One such person was selected and he expressed in public utterances the Congress attitude to the war, laying some emphasis on the Congress policy of nonviolence. It was my good fortune to have been selected to follow him and to give expression to the Congress viewpoint, with perhaps greater emphasis on the political aspect. It had been decided that I should do so, after giving due notice to the authorities, from November 7 onwards, in the district of Allahabad. That programme has been varied owing to my arrest and trial, and the opportunity to give frank and full expression to the Congress policy in regard to the war has come to me earlier than I anticipated.

[1] Statement to the Court, Gorakhpur, 3–4 November 1940. SWJN, Vol. II, pp. 486–90. Excerpts.

If I was chosen, or before me Shri Vinoba Bhave was chosen for this purpose, it was not to give expression to our individual views. We were symbols of the people of India. As individuals we may have counted for little, but as such symbols and representatives of the Indian people, we counted for a great deal. In the name of those people we asserted their right to freedom and to decide for themselves what they should do and what they would not do; we challenged the right of any other authority, by whomsoever constituted, to deprive them of this right and to enforce its will upon them. It was monstrous that any individual or group of individuals, deriving no authority from the Indian people and not responsible to them in any way, should impose their will upon them and thrust the hundreds of millions of India, without any reference to them or their representatives, into a mighty war which was none of their seeking. It was amazing and full of significance that this should be done in the name of freedom and self-determination and democracy, for which, it was alleged, the war was being waged. We were slow in coming to our final conclusions; we hesitated and parleyed, we sought a way out honourable to all the parties concerned. We failed and the inevitable conclusion was forced upon us that so far as the British Government or their representatives in India were concerned, we were still looked upon as chattels to do their will and to continue to be exploited in their imperialist structure. That was a position which we could never tolerate, whatever the consequences.

There are very few persons in India, I suppose, whether they are Indians or Englishmen, who have for years past so consistently raised their voices against fascism and Nazism as I have done. My whole nature rebelled against them and, on many an occasion, I vehemently criticized the pro-fascist and appeasement policy of the British Government. Ever since the invasion of Manchuria, and subsequently in Abyssinia, Central Europe, Spain and China, I saw with pain and anguish how country after country was betrayed in the name of this appeasement and the lamps of liberty were being put out. I realized that imperialism could only function in this way; it had to appease its rival imperialisms, or else its own ideological foundations were weakened. It had to choose between this and liquidating itself in favour of democratic freedom. There was no middle way.

So long as appeasement applied to Manchuria, Abyssinia, Czechoslovakia, Spain and Albania, "to far-away countries about which we people had ever heard," as the then Prime Minister of England put it, it did not matter much and was faithfully pursued. But when it came nearer home and threatened the British Empire itself, the clash came and war began.

Again there were two alternatives before the British Government and each government engaged in the war—to continue to function in the old imperialist way or to end this in their own domains and become the leaders of the urge for freedom and revolutionary change the world over. They chose the former,

though they talked still in terms of freedom and self-determination and democracy. But their conception of freedom was, even in words, limited to Europe, and evidently meant freedom to carry on with their Empire in the old way. Not even peril and disaster have weakened their intention to hold on to their Empire and to enforce their will upon subject peoples. In India we have had over a year of war government. The people's elected legislatures have been suspended and ignored and a greater and more widespread autocracy prevails here than anywhere else in the world. Recent measures have suppressed completely such limited freedom, as the press possessed, to give facts and opinions. If this is the prelude to the freedom that is promised us, or to the 'new order' about which so much is said, then we can well imagine what the later stages will be when England emerges as a full-blooded fascist state.

I am convinced that the large majority of the people of England are weary of empire, and hunger for a real new order. But we have to deal not with them but with their government and we have no doubt in our minds as to what that government aims at. With that we have nothing in common and we shall resist it to the uttermost. We have therefore decided to be no party to this imposed war and to declare this to the world. This war has led already to widespread destruction and will lead to even greater horror and misery. With those who suffer we sympathize deeply and in all sincerity. But unless the war has a revolutionary aim of ending the present order and substituting something based on freedom and cooperation, it will lead to a continuation of wars and violence and uttermost destruction.

That is why we must dissociate ourselves from this war and advise our people to do likewise and not help in any way with money or men. That is our bounden duty. But even apart from this, the treatment accorded to the Indian people during the past year by the British authorities, the latter's attempts to encourage every disruptive and reactionary tendency, their forcible realizations of money for the war from even the poor of India, and their repeated affronts to Indian nationalism, are such that we can never forget them or ignore them. No self-respecting people can tolerate such behaviour, and the people of India have no intention of tolerating it.

I stand before you, Sir, as an individual being tried for certain offences against the state. You are a symbol of that state. But I am also something more than an individual. I too am a symbol at the present moment, a symbol of Indian nationalism, resolved to break away from the British Empire and achieve the independence of India. It is not me that you are seeking to judge and condemn, but rather the hundreds of millions of the people of India, and that is a large task even for a proud Empire. Perhaps it may be that though I am standing before you on my trial, it is the British Empire itself that is on its trial before the bar of the world. There are more powerful forces at work in the world today than courts of law; there are elemental urges for freedom and food and

security which are moving vast masses of people, and history is being moulded by them. The future recorder of this history might well say that, in the hour of supreme trial, the Government of Britain and the people of Britain failed because they were drunk with the wine of imperialism and could not adapt themselves to a changing world. He may muse over fate, of empires which have always fallen because of this weakness, and call it destiny. Certain causes inevitably produce certain results. We know the causes; the results are following inexorably in their train.

It is a small matter what happens to me in this trial or subsequently. Individuals count for little; they come and go, as I shall go when my time is up. Seven times I have been tried and convicted by British authority in India, and many years of my life lie buried within prison walls. An eight time or a ninth, and a few more years, make little difference. But it is no small matter what happens to India and her millions of sons and daughters. That is the issue before me and that, ultimately, is the issue before you, Sir. If the British Government imagines that it can continue to exploit them and play about with them against their will, as it has done for so long in the past, then it is grievously mistaken. It has misjudged their present temper and read history in vain. . . .

Court Charge: Jawaharlal Nehru in his Maharganj speech of October 6, used expressions which tended to excite disaffection towards the Crown Representative or Government established by law in British India and adversely influenced the conduct of the public in regard to the Defence of India or the efficient prosecution of the war—an offence punishable under Rule 38(a) read clause 5 of the same rule.

JN: I do not wish to plead at all, but it is my particular function and privilege in life to spread disaffection against the Crown Representative in India and the Government established by law at present in British India.

Public Prosecutor: Under section 256 of the Cr.P.C. the court will have to wait for the next day to give the accused an opportunity to cross-examine the prosecution witnesses if he wants. Would it be desirable to adjourn the hearing and take up the case after some time in the course of the day?

JN: I do not intend to cross-examine anyone. Why this concession? Neither am I going to change my mind overnight about the procedure I have already adopted.

Court: Do you have anything to say?

JN: The government advocate has taken a lot of trouble for nothing in proving what is already proved. What I wanted to prove has been said in my statement. I assert that the Government of India Rules are the greatest insult that can be inflicted on the country and are monstrous and I want to break such a government.

27

The Meaningless Release of Prisoners[1]

I am grateful for the friendly message of the *News Chronicle*,[2] and I appreciate the warm sympathy for India's cause on the part of many friends in England. In these difficult days when passions are aroused obscuring the mind and when the relations between the Indian people and the British Government are strained to the utmost, the companionship of even some minds in different countries is of importance and helps to prevent narrowmindedness. But it must be remembered that this is of little avail if the whole background is one of hostility. Nothing is more obvious in India today than the deep and widespread hostility among all sections of the people to the system that the British Government has represented here. That hostility was an inevitable consequence of past and present history but the policy and utterances of the British Government during the last two years of war have intensified it. For the people generally that is the governing factor and wider considerations, which may move individuals, become secondary.

It is true that we in India have great differences amongst us, but have also a great deal in common which is basically more important and wise statesmanship should have emphasized and encouraged those common bonds. Instead of this the British Government has become the greatest disruptive factor in India in addition to being completely authoritatian, alien and oppressive. The only possible response to that is noncooperation with that government, for nationalism is by far the strongest urge of the Indian people. Even if individuals for wider

[1] Statement to *News Chronicle* (London), Allahabad, 11 December 1941. Cabled to *News Chronicle* from Bombay on 16 December 1941, but only extracts were published in its issue of 17 December 1941. The version reproduced here is from the *National Herald*, 21 December 1941.

[2] In its editorial of 4 December 1941, the *News Chronicle* welcomed the release of Jawaharlal and other civil disobedience prisoners. It stated that their imprisonment at the "time when we should have been doing our best to smooth the path of cooperation was an act of stupidity." It hoped that "this belated admission of error would be followed by a change of heart in the British Government over the Indian question on the whole."

reasons desire a variation of that policy, they cannot overcome the people's deep-rooted hostility and distrust of the British Government and the governmental structure in India which can only lessen by a complete change of scene and a pleasant psychological shock accompanied by the conviction that the old order has completely gone, never to come back again. Not even the most far-reaching promises of what will happen when the war ends will bring this conviction for there is no belief left in words. It is the present that counts. The Atlantic Charter[3] if applied to India would have made no difference but the deliberate non-application of it to India was significant and made it clear as the midday sun what British policy stands for.

Only the independence of India has any real meaning for us, though we believe that the day of a large number of separate national entities is past and there must be world cooperation among free nations based on certain fundamental principles. For my part, I would welcome these principles as outlined in H.G. Well's declaration of the Rights of Man with certain additions. Indians will never accept any position in an empire by whatever name it is called. India is a great nation and a mother country which has influenced in the past vast sections of the human race in Asia; she is not a colony or offshoot of another nation growing to nationhood. She wants to live in peace and friendship with all nations in the world, but she is inevitably drawn to her neighbours with whom she has had thousands of years of cultural contact, more especially to China and Burma in the East and Iran and other countries of Western Asia.

Therefore, the first essential is the recognition of Indian independence and the consignment to the dustbin of the infamous August declaration[4] and all other similar declarations of the British Government. Then only can we get over the dismal and crushing heritage of our past relations and join hands in friendship.

[3] The Atlantic Charter, issued in August 1941 by Franklin Roosevelt and Churchill as a statement of their war policy, declared among other things that "we respect the right of our people to choose the form of Government under which they will live; and we wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them." But Churchill hastened to announce on 9 September 1941 in the House of Commons that the Atlantic Charter had no application to India though, in his opinion, it was in full accord with British policy in India, as embodied in the August Offer.

[4] On 8 August 1940, the Viceroy, in reply to the Poona Offer of the Congress asking for transitional National Government during the war, stated that "a moment when the Commonwealth is engaged in a struggle for existence is not one in which fundamental constitutional issues can be decisively resolved." He accepted that the Indians should share the responsibility during the war and proposed expansion for the Governor General's Executive Council and setting up of a War Advisory Council. With regard to the position of minorities in any constitutional revision, he reiterated that the British would not accept "any system of Government where authority is directly denied to large and powerful elements in India's national life."

I realize that in the vast elemental conflicts that are raging national issues must not absorb our attention and we must view the picture as a whole. Out of this war all manner of things arise, whether we like them or not, and all we can do is to try our utmost to further the things we want to have. It is not enough to say that the war has to be won; we must win the objectives of the war, and for this purpose the objectives must be clearly stated and acted upon in the present in so far as possible. That has been the Congress position throughout and it remains so today. Some of us as individuals may wish to go further in aligning ourselves with the larger causes, but our efforts will remain ineffective unless the whole background changes in India and popular hostility is removed by vital changes. Even these individuals must oppose all cooperation with a government which treats their people and country with arrogant imperialism which is indistinguishable from fascist authoritarianism. It must be realized that mere release from prison of some people means nothing at all. By itself it is a challenge which has to be accepted.

This war has convinced me of the utter folly and criminality of armed conflict and the method of violence in international affairs. I am no pacifist, but I believe that complete disarmament of all nations must be one of the declared objectives of the war. I realize that the war must go on, whether we like it or not, and it is not possible for anyone to take up a negative attitude to it. Given the background I have indicated above, it follows that all possible support has to be given. Without that background and those steps, effective help is not possible. More particularly, I should like to express our solidarity with the peoples of China and the Soviet Union who represent many ideals that we value and who have given a magnificent demonstration of their invincible courage and spirit of sacrifice. For my part, I should like help to flow to them.

Recent development in the war situation are of intense interest to India and the political and psychological background is ever changing. Realization of this cannot, however, reach the masses unless the basic fact of the Indo-British relationship is converted into recognition of Indian independence and cooperation between free nations.

28

Insatiable Appetite for Freedom[1]

Among the many astonishing things that Sir Stafford Cripps said in the statements made by him on the eve of his departure was this: that the Congress wanted everything or nothing, and now they have nothing.[2] Only the last part of this sentence is true and it has been true all these years. But if Sir Stafford imagines that what we suggested to him was all that we have wanted or want today, he was grievously mistaken. For, we have wanted and suffered for complete independence in the present and the elimination of every foreign control in the political, economic and every other domain. We have wanted to live our lives in our own way without interference from any outsider. And, though we cannot unwrite the history of the past century and a half, the painful memory of which will persist, yet we want to remove everything, in so far as we can, that might keep the memory of our subjection fresh. We want to get rid of this world of Excellencies and Highnesses and the pomp and pageantry and wasteful extravagance and incompetence of our British rulers. We want to say to them, as I have said before, in the words of a great Englishman: 'You have sat too long here for any good you have been doing. Depart, I say, and let us have done with you. In the name of God, go'.

We want much. Our appetite for freedom is insatiable. We are hungry for it, and our throats are parched with thirst. It was not what we wanted that we told Sir Stafford Cripps, but something that we considered essential and irreducible if we were to shoulder effectively the burden of today and defend this dear country of ours to the uttermost. Without this we would remain ineffective and be mere camp-followers of those who are in control today, and who have exhibited so often their utter incapacity for the task.

[1] Statement to the press, Allahabad, 15 April 1942. *National Herald,* 16 April 1942.

[2] Cripps was reported to have said this at a press conference on 12 April 1942 at Karachi. Later, at a press conference on 22 April 1942 at London, Cripps denied it and said, "I did not say that at Karachi. . . . It was shorthand report of a long statement". He elucidated: "what would be correct would be to say that they wanted complete power immediately for representative Indians and if they could not get that complete power for representative Indians then they were not prepared to participate in the Government of India at the present stage".

It surprises me how far we went in our desire for a settlement. Many of the colleagues and even the man-in-the-street came and told me that we went too far and gave up many a precious thing that we had so long clung to. Yet, we did so deliberately, for we almost forgot everything for the moment except the peril to India and our immediate duty to defend our motherland. But, we could only defend her shoulder to shoulder with our own people, with millions of hearts stirred to action, with millions of stout arms raised in her defence, with millions, it may be, of our dead offered at the altar of her freedom. We could not defend her from the mountain tops or from Viceregal residences.

The war is upon us. It is America's war, they say, for it America that is pouring her vast resources and her treasure into this war and helping all her allies. Britain plays a minor part in it. But though America pours out her gold and sends her Flying Fortresses to the four corners of the world, we in India shall have to pay a far heavier price soon. And our price is going to be blood and tears, not of a few only but of vast numbers of people. Already we have had a foretaste of it in Malaya and Burma. But our time in India itself is coming and it was because of this that we went to the uttermost limits of concession in our talks with Sir Stafford Cripps. For, we were anxious to face this peril with the organized power of the state and our masses functioning together. That is not to be now and we function separately. From our side, there are going to be no approaches to the British Government, for we know now that whoever comes from them speaks in the same accent as of old and treats us in the same way.

So blood and tears are going to be our lot whether we like them or not. Let us not be afraid, let us not lose our anchor, let us not run away from out post of duty. But rather let us accept them willingly as men and women who go out to meet their hearts' desire. The turn of fate's wheel has brought this new ordeal to us, the last ordeal that can face a nation. Whether we remain up or go down, we shall do it bravely and with dignity, thinking ever of the honour of that great and beloved land that has given us birth and sustenance. For each one of us, man or woman, old or young, is a little bit of India and something of her old time story clings about us. Each one of us has her precious honour in our keeping, each one of us may do something to add to that glorious heritage. What we have, what we are, we owe to her; can we ever repay that debt even if we give our lives for her sake? Our blood and tears will flow; it may be that the parched soil of India needs them so that the fine flower of freedom may grow again and its fragrance envelop the land. We shall pay the price and it will be well with us if we remain true to our faith and do not falter.

29

A Vote of No-Confidence[1]

Some members of the British Parliament have given notice of a motion of no-confidence[2] in the central direction of the War. That means the British War Cabinet; that means Mr. Winston Churchill. This motion may be talked out, or ultimately withdrawn, or defeated overwhelmingly. Mr Churchill is still strong enough in Parliament to meet these assaults. Probably he is strong enough though not so strong, in the country also. Nevertheless it is clear that there is a mounting tide of dissatisfaction against those in high authority in England. Mr. Churchill came in as a positive and inevitable choice; he remains as Prime Minister for negative reasons. Who else can take his place? For the Englishman the answer is not easy and he looks round in vain. The vital test of war has shown up the utter poverty and mediocrity of British leadership. Peace-time reputations have been progressively deflated and no new star has yet arisen on the horizon. And so Mr. Churchill will continue yet for a while with the negative goodwill of the British people. But behind that almost unwilling consent, there is a deep suspicion that much is wrong.

In Britain the people can, in the final analysis, choose their leaders and their captains, though that choice is often forced by circumstances upon them, and they choose unwillingly. What would be the fate of a motion of no-confidence in the British Government in India, if such could be put to the Indian people? In other than official ways, the question has always been there and so has the answer. But it is interesting to speculate what the formal answer might be.

We know what the Congress answer would be; we know also what the Muslim League's answer would be, in spite of its reactionary leadership which is always looking up to the British Government for some additional support. We know indeed what the answer of every well-known organization in India would be. But organizations apart, everyone knows, that the hundreds of millions of India would troop up and vote against the British Government and

[1] Article written by Jawaharlal Nehru on 30 June 1942. *National Herald*, 3 July 1942.

[2] The long succession of British defeats, culminating in the fall of Tobruk on 21 June 1942, led to a motion of censure in the House of Commons moved by Sir John Wardlaw-Milne and seconded by Admiral Sir Roger Keyes. It expressed "no-confidence in the central direction of the war." The debate was fixed for 21st July.

its representatives in India. 'Pack up and go and leave us to ourselves, we have had enough of you,' would be the thundering cry from those hundreds of millions of throats or, as Maulana Mohamed Ali used to say, do not pack up but go. There would be the mightiest vote in history, a whole people voting on one side, and hardly a soul on the other. Even those who cling to the British Government in India, through fear or favour, will line up with those who want to get rid of it. For everyone knows what they have in their hearts and the measure of their attachment to British rule.

It is natural and inevitable for Indians to wish to get rid of the British Government in India. But it is surprising to find how every Indian bitterly dislikes this government. And not in India only but in all countries of Asia, this dislike is widespread and intense. That is the final judgement on British imperialism and we need not go to history to seek an answer. The present shouts out that answer and behind that answer there is a warning and a prophesy. For this is the nemesis of empire. Humpty Dumpty has fallen and not all the King's men, nor all the King's horses, will set him up again.

And yet Mr. Churchill and his colleagues talk still of Empire and, what is worse, behave in the old imperialist way. And when disasters come they seek superficial explanations and find trivial remedies. The real explanation is Empire, the real remedy is the complete liquidation of that Empire. Not through Empire will they gain the ear or heart of Asia, and Asia counts and will count. The voice of Asia, so long silent, is loud and insistent, and it is India's privilege today to speak not on her own behalf only but for Asia as a whole, as well as for all the subject peoples of the world.

Victory today is not just a matter of military tactics or high strategy. It is inescapably connected with what happens to the millions of Asia for they may well play the deciding role. It is connected with moral issues, economic issues and political issues. It is connected with what happens to Indian rule in India.

What a government we have in this unhappy land! It is a foreign government and we would object to it in any event if it was an efficient one. But it has not a single merit left, except a passionate desire to hold on to its privileged position, if that be counted a merit. There is no mind left in it, no capacity for intelligent and effective action, no competence, no will to achieve or to win through. It distrusts everybody in India and it even distrusts itself. Inevitably it reminds us of the last days of the Manchus in China.

We must deplore the growth of the spirit of hatred in India for out of hatred alone no great work is done. Hatred may be a driving force but it is self-destructive also, and the cooperative commonwealth of man that we look forward to will not come out of the morass of hatred. And yet hatred and ill will must inevitably emerge from the barbarous relationships that an empire establishes and promotes. We want a civilized relationship between man and man and nation and nation.

So Empire must go, not only because it is evil but because it is a hindrance to victory of the progressive forces in the world. That is why the cry of 'Quit India' becomes a vital, urgent and essential cry for victory. Only when this is done will there be a real will to win among the Indian people as well as among the people of England and other Allied countries. Only then will all strength and energy seize the people of India and be translated into effective action.

30

The Shape of Things to Come[1]

We live in extraordinary times of crisis and tension when every day brings a surfeit of news good and bad, usually bad. All sense of continuity has gone from our lives and we sit on the edge of the volcano of change. What that change is going to be, few even among the prophets can say. Inevitably our attention is absorbed in the tragic drama of the moment and in the pressing problems that surround us and threaten to overwhelm us.

Nevertheless it is not enough for us to lose ourselves in the present and not to think of the future. That future, after all, will take its shape out of this present. It may be that this future is beyond our control, for vast elemental forces are at work and human beings, however big they may appear to be in the contemporary scene, are but playthings in the hands of those elemental forces which are shaping the world. Still it is obvious that that future will be shaped by human beings for human beings. It becomes important therefore that, whatever the burdens we may have to carry in the present, we may not forget that future. If we are to play a worthy and effective part in that future, we have to prepare our minds from today. Any such preparation will of necessity be incomplete and liable to change, so that we may fit in with a changing environment. There must be very few indeed the world over who can doubt that we are seeing today the end of the world, politically, economically and socially speaking, as we have known it. An English author, Gerald Heard, has divided up world history into two periods: from the earliest times to 1939, and 1939 onwards. We are not sure of the exact date of division that he has given, but so far as we remember it was 1939. This division was meant to bring out dramatically the fact that an epoch has closed and we are struggling on the threshold of a new epoch.

It is difficult for most of us who live at this crisis of world history to appreciate the full significance of events as they happen all around us. We think too much in terms of a dead past, just as the British Government is blind enough to continue to think in terms of a dying empire. And because we think so, we cannot solve our problems nor open the door of the future. It is not the old and rusty key of the past that we have known that will open this lock. So we argue

[1] Wardha, 6 July 1942. Unsigned editorial for the *National Herald*. JN Papers, NMML.

and talk about things which have little meaning in terms of the future—Pakistan, Dominion Status, Indian States, and so on and so forth. The most revolutionary-minded among our people behave as if revolution consisted of big slogans, or possibly violence. They have become, in spite of their phrases and slogans and the old-type activities, the true conservatives of the present age, who refuse to change though the world about them changes. It is extraordinary how slow the human mind is to adapt itself to changing conditions. These objective conditions are always far ahead of the human mind, except in the case of a few choice spirits who can see with clear vision into the present and into the future.

For a supreme example of this lag of the human mind we must go today to the British Government. There is nothing so amazing as the way this Government and the people who support it continue to function in terms of some generations ago. Their agents in the Government of India even excel their superiors; living in turmoil and yet almost unaware of the tumult of life, they talk of empire when that empire has tottered all about them. It is only when the full realization of this fact comes to the British Government that they will make themselves fit to carry on this war as it should be carried on. Till then they will remain in a morass, helplessly trying to extricate themselves from the reality of the present which they have so far refused to understand.

But it is not good enough for us to criticize others. We must look deep into ourselves. We live in many ways in a world of unreality and spend our time and energy over trifling happenings, forgetting the reality behind it all. That reality is the future that is slowly and inevitably taking shape in the present. That shape is vague and amorphous and appears to be ever changing. Nevertheless it is taking shape and it may be possible for us to control to some extent that development. In any event a vital and living nation cannot allow itself to be a passive plaything of fate. Therefore, while we are engaged in the present, we must also think of the future, what it is likely to be, what we would like it to be, what we must try to make it.

31

Fear Complex[1]

The war which has just ended led to the postponement of many urgent problems. In some cases this was inevitable as attention had to be concentrated on the prosecution of the war, in many other cases the war was made an excuse for such postponement. The final end of the great World War has suddenly brought all these problems to the forefront and war conditions can no longer be pleaded as an excuse. Both from the national and international points of view the question of India's freedom, political and economic, is now an urgent and vital issue on which depends not only the well-being of four hundred millions but also, to a large extent, the future peace of the world. This question, always vital and important, has now been precipated to the very forefront and there can be no further delay in its solution. The solution has now to be a final and permanent one and not any temporary arrangement for a transitional period. Such a final settlement can only mean the establishment of a democratic government for a free and independent India cooperating in the international domain with the other free governments of the world. As a part of this final settlement, and for the brief period between now and the assumption of the government of free India under a constitution framed by the constituent assembly, interim governments both in the centre and the provinces will be necessary in order to deal with the acute distress prevailing in the country and with post-war problems which may intensify it, as well as to arrange the preliminary processes of the constituent assembly. But such interim arrangements can only be possible as a part of the final settlement.

It is common ground that the future of India and the constitution of a free Indian state can only be decided by the people of India through their duly elected representatives. For this purpose a constituent assembly has to be formed and such an assembly will decide on the future relations between India and Great Britain, and will also nominate representatives to confer with representatives of Britain in regard to the many problems between the two countries which require consideration and settlement.

[1] This statement of Maulana Azad dated Gulmarg, 17 August 1945, was drafted by Jawaharlal Nehru and released to the press on 20 August 1945 from Srinagar. JN Papers, NMML.

It has been stated on behalf of the British Government that a constituent assembly should be summoned at the conclusion of hostilities. Hostilities have now ceased. The only excuse that may be advanced for a possible delay in convening the constituent assembly is the lack of a solution of the communal problem. This should offer no difficulty as the Indian National Congress has gone a long way to find a solution. Even if, unhappily, a full solution satisfactory to all the main groups concerned is not reached previously, the constituent assembly, representing these main groups, will itself be in a favourable position to tackle and solve this problem with mutual consent. That assembly will meet in a new atmosphere and with the power and ability to decide without interference from outside and this will no doubt result in a mutuality satisfactory settlement.

In regard to the Hindu-Muslim problem, as it has taken shape today with the demand on the part of the Muslim League for a partition of the country, the Congress has given the most earnest consideration to it, desiring as it does the well-being and freedom of the country as a whole and of each group or community in it. It has even recognized the right of self-determination of any area provided that this is the established and declared will of the inhabitants of that area, but subject to the exercise of such right not resulting in the compulsion of any other group or community, which is equally entitled to self-determination. The Congress is convinced that the free Indian state can only be based on the willing cooperation of its federating units and of its principal communities and cannot be founded on compulsion. Further the Congress has declared that the federating units should have the largest conceivable amount of freedom as they wish, subject only to certain essential bonds for their common welfare. Even independent countries adjoining each other have to develop these common bonds and links and can no longer live in isolation. Thus the Congress has gone to the farthest limit in recognizing the right of self-determination even to the extent of separation under certain circumstances and with certain safeguards for the communities affected and for the country as a whole. It has done so in the earnest hope and belief that when the problems are viewed in proper perspective and without passion and prejudice, the facts of the situation will induce all concerned to cooperate together in building up a free and democratic Indian state, with every freedom to the constituent units to develop according to their needs and wishes. But if any such unit decides otherwise, it can take charge of its own destiny. It will be open to the representatives of such a unit in the constituent assembly to advance its claims and a decision on this should not rest on the majority vote of the assembly but on mutual consent and on the vote of the representatives in the assembly of the areas concerned.

While the Congress position is clear, doubts and suspicions have not wholly disappeared, and I feel that in order to remove these, some clarification is needed. I propose therefore to place this matter before the next meeting of the

Working Committee, and if necessary before the A.I.C.C., and I am confident that the desired clarification will be forthcoming.

So far as I am concerned, after long careful deliberation I have come to the conclusion that the division of India is wholly impracticable and opposed to the ultimate interests of Indian Muslims themselves. In the modern context of the world, with the vast and terrible potentialities of the new atomic bomb, all of us have to think in new terms and to discard many old and cherished notions. In this modern world it is not a division of a country that one can think of, but of ever larger federations of nations. Or else there is no freedom or independence or progress or self-defence. The world is changing before our eyes with something very different from what it was, and if we are to stand on our feet and march to our goal we can only do so effectively as a strong and united nation.

But though I am convinced of this, I realize also that the present political atmosphere of the country is surcharged with suspicion and doubt and a large section among Indian Muslims does not seem to be in a mood to view realities in their proper perspective. This section can be expected to do so only when it is assured that the determination of their destinies rests with Muslims themselves without external compulsions. When this is realized the suspicion and doubt will largely disappear and efforts to reach a desirable and mutually satisfactory solution of the communal problem will be fruitful. Such an assurance has in effect been given by the Congress and I am confident that it will be clarified and implemented in the future.

In the great task before us, all of us must get rid of the fear complex. I appeal therefore to my fellow Muslims to view the question in this perspective realizing that their future lies in their own hands and there can be no compulsion on them. I appeal also to my Hindu and Sikh and other fellow citizens to appreciate this approach to a problem which has troubled us so much and has been a bar to our progress. With this approach on the part of Muslims and Hindus and Sikhs and others, I have no doubt that the atmosphere of distrust will undergo a change and give place to a climate of mutual trust. Even that section of Indian Muslims who are full of doubts today, will give up their suspicion when they realize that no decision will be imposed upon them and they will examine the problem dispassionately as Indians. Thus this approach, instead of encouraging fissiparous tendencies, will, by removing the very cause of distrust, also put an end to the desire for separation, and will thus promote that real unity on which alone a free India can be based.

32

Fateful Years[1]

The last five years have been fateful in the history of the world and of India, and their deep impress lies in every mind and heart. Who can tell their story effectively and make the printed page a picture of the long agony of these years, with their moments of exaltation and noble endeavour and splendid courage, and then long hours of sorrow and doubt and frustration, and civilization with all its brilliant achievements intent on its own destruction, through some inner decay or lack of moral foundations? Perhaps in some age yet to come a future historian will draw that picture and wonder at the folly of this generation. And yet he will miss that experience which has given an unforgettable reality to these years. But we who have been the actors or onlookers and carry that experience on our deep-lined faces and our hardened hearts, how can we tell this story which has been the weft and warp of our individual lives, how can we lay bare the innermost recesses of our being?

[1] A note, 11 October 1945. JN Papers, NMML.

33

Jai Hind[1]

Three years and three months ago we suspended publication. Not, as normally happens in this country, by imperial decree, but in obedience to the mandate of the Congress, and because we felt that our honour as Indians and as newspapers compelled us to refuse to submit to ignoble conditions. Three years have passed and we start afresh, but the memory of these years lies heavily in our minds and we are much older than this brief span of years might indicate.

Three years of war and tumult, and sorrow and death, of hope and despair, of the sudden and spontaneous rising of the common man in India and its brutal suppression. Years of solitude in prison cells, and of thousands driven underground, homeless and disinherited wanderers, keeping the flag of resistance high against tremendous odds. Years also of others of our blood and race, dreaming of India's freedom, adopting, unknown to us, methods different from ours to achieve it. Beyond our frontiers there was the tramp of armed men, and armed women, pledged to the independence of India, and new stirring cries rent the air.

All this and much more the years have brought us. The World War has ended, appropriately with the atom bomb, not with a whimper but with a bang, and the United Nations glare at each other and, behind a cover of fine phrases, snatch at the seeming spoils of victory. Imperialism, although dying, yet raises its head in India and elsewhere; in Indonesia a gallant people, struggling for freedom, are bombed and shelled by British armies.

Six years ago the Congress Working Committee, apprehensive of the future, stated that "it will be infinite tragedy if even this terrible war is carried on in the spirit of imperialism and for the purpose of retaining this structure which is itself the cause of war and human degradation". The war is over and already it is possible to judge how far that apprehension was justified.

With this heavy burden of the past few years we start afresh. What do we stand for? What does the *National Herald* represent? Wherein does it differ from other newspapers? It is difficult to say. There are many newspapers in this country with a long and honourable record and it would be presumptuous for

[1] Signed editorial in the *National Herald* when the paper resumed publication on 30 November 1945 after more than three years of closure. SWJN, Vol. 14, pp. 125–8.

us to compare our young and somewhat wayward selves with these popular and well-established organs of solid respectability. Yet there has been, perhaps, something in the *Herald*, something which has brought us in the past the affection and goodwill of the public. We represent the Congress viewpoint of course, for we believe the Congress to be the voice of the nation and to reflect in its many-sided self the varied urges of the Indian people. In the struggle for India's freedom especially, it has been the flame that has lighted up people's hearts and the shining sword that has cut so many of our shackles. But it would be incorrect to say, as has sometimes been said, that the *Herald* is an official organ of the Congress, for the Congress has had, and has no such official organs. And, therefore, what the *Herald* may write in no way commits the Congress.

Some people have referred to the *Herald* as representing my personal views. That also is not correct and much has appeared in the *Herald* in the past with which I did not wholly agree. It is true that I have been associated with it and I have valued that association. But the *Herald* is a joint concern and we have tried to work it in a spirit of cooperation and comradeship between directors and editors, leaving the editors freedom to do their work. My direct responsibility is only for the articles that I might myself contribute.

We start afresh and in doing so we have had innumerable difficulties to face, and those difficulties continue, for we cannot obtain the machinery and equipment that we desire, and we have naturally not prospered during these war years. Wartime, whatever misfortune or sorrow it may bring, is usually a time of prosperity for newspapers. But it has not been so for us, for it has been our proud privilege to share in the ups and downs of our people during these years of pain and suffering. It is not with apology that we face our readers, but as comrades in arms and equals in the mighty struggle for India's freedom. And as comrades we claim their indulgence for our failings and for the many shortcomings which inevitably accompany the resumption of a newspaper in these abnormal times. We are determined to overcome them and to be worthy of our people and of the cause we represent.

Three years ago Governor Hallett publicly stated about the Congress: "We wish to destroy the organization and render it impossible for the movement to grow and expand." Sir Maurice Hallett is soon leaving this province and India. What does he think now of that proud declaration, backed as it was with the armed legions of a mighty empire? Who flourishes today? Who will flourish tomorrow in India? Has he known at any time, during his long residence in India, the Congress to be so popular, so powerful, so representative of the people's passion for freedom as it is today? He goes, as others have gone before him, having failed utterly in his endeavour, having, indeed, by the very ruthlessness of his opposition, fed the flames of a nation's resistance to alien rule. Has the lesson been learnt or are there others still who presume to stop or check the onward march of India to independence?

We, on our part, have learnt many a lesson, for life for us has been a hard taskmaster and our people have repeatedly gone through the valley of suffering and the ordeal by fire. If we were determined previously, there is more of steel in us today and a measure of desperation, and a passion that drives us on and allows us no respite, and a feeling of intolerable anguish that the four hundred millions of India should be the plaything of others who have reduced them to this state of poverty and famine and ignoble subservience.

What of our people? After these black years they are vital again and defiant as they have never been before. Even the memory of recent sorrows fades away in the exuberance of the moment and in the vision of the future that they see unfolding itself. They have to check that exuberance lest it waste their energy and lead them away from the highway we have to tread. But they have to guard and preserve that vitality, that refusal to submit to the degradation of alien rule, that firm and final resolve to which form was given three years ago in the words 'Quit India'.

We ended our last leading article, which appeared in the *Herald* on August 15, 1942, with the words: *Vande Mataram*. The motherland is dear to us and it is right that we should pay our homage to her. And yet even these words of hallowed memory, enshrined in our country's history, are somewhat out of date today. We bow to no one today, for we are soldiers of India, and our little selves are bits of that dear motherland of ours, and her honour is in our keeping. Today our cry is of unity, of freedom, of victory. It is a cry which has resounded and reverberated in the valleys and mountains beyond India; and the old walls of the Red Fort in Delhi have echoed it, and today it is spreading far and wide to our remotest villages. It is our salute and greeting, our challenge and our battle-cry, our token of fealty to each other, our pledge to be true to our cause. So to our readers and comrades we say: *Jai Hind*! May it be well with them in the difficult days to come. May it be well with India, and may freedom come to her soon and be equally shared by all her children. *Jai Hind! Jai Hind!*

34

British Policy and India[1]

Allahabad, January 27, 1946

My dear Stafford,

In every country there are a number of forces at work and they usually succeed in establishing some kind of equilibrium, stable or unstable. For the moment this equilibrium represents the balance of forces. It is a changing equilibrium. In India a certain dominant external force—the British power—prevented, for more than a century, the internal forces from establishing an equilibrium between themselves. Their growth and interaction were limited and arrested and an artificial facade was imposed upon the country. Because of this arrested growth, problems piled up and could find no solution. Many relics of past ages continued which would normally have been swept away. It is these relics that constitute some of our most important problems today.

British policy, in order to maintain British rule, was inevitably one of balance and counterpoise, one of preventing unity and encouraging fissiparous tendencies, and one of protecting and strengthening the reactionary elements in the country. Even when British policy spoke a different language, it functioned in much the same way, for its agents in India did not change or think differently. The final word in practice lay with these agents and they continued to represent the old style imperialist authoritarian tradition. Because of this, British policy could not really change; it wobbled occasionally, spoke in two voices, postponed and procrastinated, and meanwhile, carried on in the old way. This old way was essentially one opposed to the progressive and vital forces in the country and of encouragement to every tendency which was reactionary and obscurantist. Incapable of solving any of India's urgent problems, it relied more and more on persons and groups who were usually corrupt and chiefly interested in opposing change.

In pursuance of this policy, separate electorates were introduced, the seed of the poisonous tree that has grown now to poison all our national life and prevent progress. With the growth of the national movement, the British Government and its agents intensified their support of separatist tendencies. In

[1] To Stafford Cripps, JN Correspondence, NMML. Excerpts.

particular they encouraged the growth of the Muslim League. All other organizations were more or less swept away by the Congress, only the League remained and so the League was helped in a variety of ways. Even today in the elections many government officials are actively helping the League candidates. The voters' registers were prepared and manipulated in such a way as to favour the League and large numbers of bogus names were introduced. In Benares we have the remarkable instance of more names on the Muslim register than there are Muslim inhabitants in the city.

During recent years (war years) Linlithgow and co., much as they disliked Jinnah, still did everything to help the League. Your proposals made in 1942 on behalf of the War Cabinet, acknowledging the right of secession, gave a tremendous fillip to the League's demand for Pakistan and increased its prestige.[2] Last year's Simla Conference failing because the Viceroy accepted Jinnah's veto, also led Muslims to think that the League, supported by the British Government, was too powerful to be opposed by them.

As a whole Muslims are politically backward, with no sufficiently developed middle class and hardly any notable leaders, with the exception of Jinnah. They can be more easily moved by a religious cry than the Hindus. There has been scandalous corruption wherever Muslim League Ministries have functioned. There is no doubt that the League is at present the most powerful organization amongst them but the way this has been built up is strikingly similar to the Nazi technique. It has no constructive approach or objectives and its leaders have openly said that they base their appeal on hatred. There has been and is plenty of hooliganism and violence against political opponents.[3] Pakistan as such is hardly understood or appreciated by most members of the League; it is a sentimental slogan which they have got used to. There is at the same time a definite revolt against it among Muslims and I believe this is growing. It is impossible to say how many think this way. Generally upper-class Muslims are for the League with a mass following. The Shias are against it, so is the Jamiat, weaver and artisan class, which is a kind of depressed class among the Muslims. Then

[2] The draft declaration of 1942 proceeded on the assumption that partition would in the last resort provide a solution of the Hindu-Muslim question. "His Majesty's Government undertake to accept and implement forthwith the constitution so framed, subject only to the right of any province of British India that is not prepared to accept the new constitution to retain its present constitutional position, provision being made for its subsequent accession if it so decides. With such non-acceding Provinces, should they so desire, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to agree upon a new constitution, giving them the same full status as the Indian Union, and arrived at by a procedure analogous to that here laid down."

[3] About this time, at several places in the U.P., supporters of the Muslim League had behaved violently towards Nationalist Muslim leaders. For example, on 4 October 1945, Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani, president of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Hind, was attacked and insulted by the Muslim League.

Momins have definitely begun to think along class lines and resent the upper class leadership of the Muslim League.

During the past five years the League has had a clear field in India. The Congress was almost continually under ban and in prison. We have thus had no approach to the Muslim masses and they have been fed by lies both by the League and Government propagandists. I presume you know how the Congress has been slandered in England and America by British spokesmen and the most obviously false things said about it. During the last three months we have again started approaching the Muslim masses and the results have been remarkably encouraging. Probably they will not affect the elections much as we have not had enough time. But they are laying the foundations of solid work among the Muslim masses which will make a difference before very long.

I shall not prophesy the results of the provincial elections. We shall know them soon enough. . . .

Elections and their results apart, there is extreme tension in the country, a sense of intolerable strain, and an overwhelming urge to change the present government in the Centre and the provinces. Elections have somewhat held people in check but as soon as these are over, events, of their own motion, will march swiftly. They can be controlled by definite policies being laid down and acted upon leading to swift change. Delay might well lead to disastrous consequences. What happened in Calcutta two months ago and what is happening in Bombay now are significant signs of the fires below the surface. A spark lights them. In a sense the Congress represents these forces but they are stronger than any organization and can be controlled only to a limited extent and provided conditions are favourable.

Jinnah appears to be wholly intransigent and threatens bloodshed and rioting if anything is done without his consent. It is impossible of course to hang up everything simply because Jinnah does not agree. (That is what the British Government has done so far with very unfortunate consequences. But this cannot be repeated.) I do not think there is much in Jinnah's threat. The Muslim League leadership is far too reactionary (they are mostly landlords) and opposed to social change to dare to indulge in any form of direct action. They are incapable of it, having spent their lives in soft jobs. If it is once made clear that violence on their part will not help them at all, they will subside. But it is very likely there may be riots, especially in the U.P., probably encouraged by local officials and the police who want to discredit the Congress. There will be no real strength behind them. Even if there was some strength it is impossible to hold up everything for fear of them. The other consequences are of graver import.

The British Government has to decide once for all its policy in regard to this matter. It can no longer sit on the fence. It cannot force Pakistan on India, in the form demanded by Jinnah, for that certainly will lead to civil war.

Jinnah's demand included Assam, Delhi, the whole of the Punjab and Bengal, the N.W.F. Province, Sind, Baluchistan. By no stretch of imagination can Assam, Delhi and large parts of Punjab and Bengal, which have a non-Muslim majority, be included in Pakistan. Probably even in these elections the North West Frontier Province will declare against the League. Even if the Muslims as a whole support the League and Pakistan, that can only mean a division of both Punjab and Bengal. Jinnah has indignantly rejected this. What then? Compulsion of other areas to join Pakistan? That is inconceivable and impossible. Thus the crux of the Pakistan issue is this: A Pakistan consisting of only part of Punjab and part of Bengal, or no separation at all. . . .

A vote for the Muslim League is no vote for Pakistan. It is only a vote for a popular organization which represents a certain solidarity of Indian Muslims.

I suppose you know what the Congress has proposed from time to time to solve the communal problem. It has stated that there should be a federation of autonomous units with a certain minimum list of compulsory common subjects. These have not been enumerated but presumably they will be defence, foreign affairs, communications, currency, etc. In addition there should be an optional list of common subjects which can be agreed to or not as the federating unit desires, This gives the maximum of freedom and self-reliance to the units and a sense of functioning as they wish. Further there can be any number of safeguards for minorities etc., and finally a supreme court should be empowered to protect minority rights. Finally if a definite area expresses its will clearly in favour of separatism and this is feasible, no compulsion will be exercised to force it to remain in the federation or union. But it cannot take other areas away with it against their will, and there must be a clear decision by plebiscite of all the adult voters of that area. I cannot imagine any more generous and far-reaching offer. Yet Jinnah refuses both the plebiscite and the demarcation of the area according to the wishes of the inhabitants. It seems clear that he is not after Pakistan but something entirely different, or perhaps he is after nothing at all except to stop all change and progress. As a matter of fact it has become increasingly clear that Pakistan is just a fantasy which cannot be realized in the present context of India and the world. . . .

For the problem is not one so much of logical analysis as of psychological appreciation. Deep passions are at work and they must be understood and appreciated before that situation itself can be understood. What I have found wholly lacking in statements and speeches made in London is this psychological approach. . . .

It is this emotional and psychological aspect of the Indian problem that is so vitally important today. It can only be apprehended by outsiders imaginatively and with sympathy for a long-suffering people who have long endured frustration and repression. That imagination has been wholly absent in the past, and so much has been said and done that has hurt the Indian people and scars

remain. Apart from happenings in India, Indonesia and Indo-China have created intense bitterness and a conviction that nothing can be expected from the British Government. The gulf has never been so wide and it will not be easy to bridge it. Yet perhaps it can be bridged even now with a great effort.

At any rate I hope so and work to that end. But if conflict comes, obviously I shall be in the middle of it, for I stand with my people. I stand by them because I believe them to be right on this issue and because I cannot desert them when they are facing dangers and difficulties. But I want to avoid conflict for it is a terrible waste of national energy and it leaves a bad legacy. I have spent enough of my life in conflict and during the years that remain to me I want to build and not to destroy. Everything in India cries aloud for constructive effort, and yet the way to it is barred. Once it is opened, and it can only be opened by independence, then we shall jump ahead.

Forgive me for this infliction. I have hesitated to write to you on these issues, but, since you asked me, I felt I had to do so. . . .

Yours,
Jawaharlal

35

On the Cabinet Mission Statement[1]

The Working Committee have given careful consideration to the statement dated May 16, 1946 issued by the delegation of the British Cabinet and the Viceroy on behalf of the British Government, as well as the correspondence[2] relating to it that has passed between the Congress President and the members of the delegation. They have examined it with every desire to find a way for a peaceful and cooperative transfer of power and the establishment of a free and independent India. Such an India must necessarily have a strong central authority capable of representing the nation with power and dignity in the counsels of the world. In considering the statement, the Working Committee have kept in view the picture of the future, in so far as this was available to them from the proposals made for the formation of a provisional government and the clarification given by members of the delegation. This picture is still incomplete and vague. It is only on the basis of the full picture that they can judge and come to a decision as to how far this is in conformity with the objectives they aim at. These objectives are: independence for India, a strong, though limited, central authority, full autonomy for the provinces, the establishment of a democratic structure in the Centre and in the units, the guarantee of the fundamental rights of each individual so that he may have full and equal opportunities of growth, and further that each community should have opportunity to live the life of its choice within the larger framework.

The Committee regret to find a divergence between these objectives and the various proposals that have been made on behalf of the British Government, and, in particular, there is no vital change envisaged during the interim period when the provisional government will function in spite of the assurance given in paragraph 23 of the statement.[3] If the independence of India is aimed at, then

[1] Resolution drafted by Jawaharlal Nehru. The Congress Working Committee passed the resolution on 24 May 1946. *The Transfer of Power 1942–7*, Vol. VII, pp. 679–82.

[2] The letters exchanged by the Congress, the Muslim League, and the Cabinet Mission during the Simla Conference were published in the newspapers on 18 May 1946.

[3] It read: "The British Government . . . will give the fullest measure of cooperation to the government so formed in the accomplishment of its tasks of administration and in bringing about as rapid and smooth a transition as possible."

the functioning of the provisional government must approximate closely in fact, even though not in law, to that independence and all obstructions and hindrances to it should be removed. The continued presence of a foreign army of occupation is a negation of independence.[4]

The statement issued by the Cabinet delegation and the Viceroy contains certain recommendations and suggests a procedure for the building up of a constituent assembly, which is sovereign in so far as the framing of the constitution is concerned. The Committee do not agree with some of these recommendations. In their view it will be open to the constituent assembly itself at any stage to make changes and variations, with the proviso that in regard to certain major communal matters a majority decision of both the major communities will be necessary.[5]

The procedure for the election of the constituent assembly is based on representation in the ratio of one to a million, but the application of this principle appears to have been overlooked in the case of European members of assemblies, particularly in Assam and Bengal.[6] Therefore, the Committee expect that this oversight will be corrected.[7]

The constituent assembly is meant to be a fully elected body, chosen by the elected members of the provincial legislatures. In Baluchistan there is no elected assembly or any other kind of chamber which might elect a representative for the constituent assembly. It would be improper for any kind of nominated individual to speak for the whole province of Baluchistan, which he really does not represent in any way.

In Coorg the Legislative Council contains some nominated members as well as Europeans elected from a special constituency of less than a hundred electors. Only the elected members from the general constituencies should participate in the election.

[4] It was explained in the reply of the Cabinet Mission that during the interim period the British Parliament had, under the existing constitution, the ultimate responsibility for the security of India, and it was therefore necessary that British troops should remain.

[5] In its reply on 25 May 1946, the Cabinet Mission assured the Congress that the projected constituent assembly would be free from interference, and when it had completed its labours the British Government would recommend to Parliament the action necessary to cede sovereignty to the Indian people, provided there was adequate provision for the protection of minorities and willingness to conclude a treaty for matters arising out of the transfer of power.

[6] In the assemblies of Bengal and Assam (Section C) the Europeans had, under the Government of India Act of 1935, representation out of all proportion to their population. On this basis they would be in a position to elect seven representatives to the constituent assembly out of a total of 34 from Section C as a whole. Although their community numbered only 21,000 in the two provinces, they would have representation equivalent to seven millions.

[7] The Cabinet Mission replied that this question was one for the Europeans to decide.

The statement of the Cabinet delegation affirms the basic principle of provincial autonomy and residuary powers vesting in the provinces. It is further said that provinces should be free to form groups. Subsequently, however, it is recommended that provincial representatives will divide up into sections which 'shall proceed to settle the provincial constitution for the provinces in each section and shall also decide whether any group constitution shall be set up for those provinces." There is a marked discrepancy in these two separate provisions, and it would appear that a measure of compulsion is introduced which clearly infringes the basic principle of provincial autonomy. In order to retain the recommendatory character of the statement, and in order to make the clauses consistent with each other, the Committee read paragraph 15 to mean that, in the first instance, the respective provinces will make their choice whether or not to belong to the section in which they are placed. Thus the constituent assembly must be considered as a sovereign body with final authority for the purpose of drawing up a constitution and giving effect to it.[8]

The provisions[9] in the statement in regard to the Indian States are vague and much has been left for future decision. The Working Committee would, however, like to make it clear that the constituent assembly cannot be formed of entirely disparate elements, and the manner of appointing state representatives for the constituent assembly must approximate, in so far as is possible, to the method adopted in the provinces. The Committee are gravely concerned to learn that even at this present moment some State governments are attempting to crush the spirit of their people with the help of armed forces. These recent developments in the States are of great significance in the present and for the future of India, as they indicate that there is no real change of policy on the part of some of the State governments and of those who exercise paramountcy.

A provisional national government must have a new basis and must be a precursor of the full independence that will emerge from the constituent assembly. It must function in recognition of that fact, though changes in law need not be made at this stage. The Governor-General may continue as the head of that government during the interim period, but the government should function as a cabinet responsible to the Central Legislature. The status, powers

[8] The constituent assembly did not have sovereign rights. The powers and functions of the constituent assembly were to be recommendatory and not mandatory. But the Cabinet Mission was content to reply that the Congress interpretation of the paragraphs relating to the sections did not accord with its intentions. The grouping of provinces was an essential feature of the scheme and could be modified only by an agreement between the parties.

[9] The Cabinet Mission had stated that the British Government could not and would not, in any circumstances, transfer paramountcy to an Indian government. Paramountcy would cease when an independent government came into being in British India. States would then be free to enter into federal relationship or political arrangements with the new government or among themselves.

and composition of the provisional government should be fully defined in order to enable the Committee to come to a decision.[10] Major communal issues shall be decided in the manner referred to above in order to remove any possible fear or suspicion from the minds of a minority.

The Working Committee consider that the connected problems involved in the establishment of a provisional government and a constituent assembly should be viewed together so that they may appear as parts of the same picture, and there may be coordination between the two, as well as an acceptance of the independence that is now recognized as India's right and due. It is only with the conviction that they are engaged in building up a free, great and independent India, that the Working Committee can approach this task and invite the cooperation of all the people of India. In the absence of a full picture, the Committee are unable to give a final opinion at this stage.[11]

[10] The Congress was assured in reply that the interim government which would be entirely Indian would have the greatest possible freedom in the day-to-day administration and treated "with the same close consultation and consideration as a Dominion Government". Yet it would work under the existing constitution and therefore could not be responsible to the Central Legislature. It was open to its members to resign if they were in conflict with the legislature.

[11] On 25 June 1946, the Congress announced its acceptance of the statement of 16 May subject to its own interpretation of the compulsory grouping of provinces.

36

Finding A Solution[1]

25 May 1946

Dear Lord Wavell,

You must have received the copy of the resolution[2] which the Congress Working Committee passed yesterday. The Committee is dispersing now and I am also leaving Delhi tomorrow evening. Before I go away I feel that I owe it to you and to myself to let you have a glimpse of what I have in my mind. We have met on several occasions during the past seven weeks and discussed various matters and, I suppose, we have got to know each other to some extent. I am grateful to you for your courtesy and your frank and friendly talks.

And yet I feel profoundly depressed and disappointed at the turn events have taken. We came to Delhi two months ago with some hope that at long last a way might be found for a peaceful settlement of the Indian problem on the basis of independence. You know that the independence of India has been our sheet-anchor for many years, independence, that is, not in the future but now. It was only on that basis that we could discuss any future or present arrangements in India. Mr. Attlee's statement[3] in the British Parliament encouraged us. Then came the Cabinet delegation and we began these long and interminable discussions. Repeatedly we were held up, as we are today, because someone wanted more time. This was sometimes, I suppose, unavoidable, but it has been nevertheless an odd procedure where vital and urgent problems are concerned. Gradually people's enthusiasm waned and they began to think of other matters.

I have no doubt about the earnest desire of the members of the Cabinet delegation to find a satisfactory solution of India's problems. But the impression has been growing upon me that there are certain limitations under which they are working and which somehow came in our way. What these limitations are I do not know, but occasionally the glimpses we have had are very far from

[1] Letter to Lord Wavell, JN Papers, NMML. *The Transfer of Power* 1942–7. Vol. VII, pp. 692–6. Excerpts.

[2] See ante, pp. 312–15.

[3] On 15 March 1946, Attlee assured Indians that the Cabinet Mission's intention was to help India to attain freedom as speedily and completely as possible. He also stated that the British Government would not allow the minority to place a veto on the advance of the majority.

reassuring and we have felt that, despite everything the old spirit and the old approach have not changed so much.

This has been particularly so in regard to the proposals for the formation of the provisional government. Much has happened during the past few years which has changed India and the world. And yet these proposals do not indicate as if anything remarkable had happened. We are still told of the responsibility of the British Parliament and the Governor-General's prerogatives and discretionary powers. It is surely not on this basis that it is sought to usher in Indian independence. Over four years ago, when Sir Stafford Cripps came to India in March 1942, we put forward certain proposals for a provisional government. There was no agreement then and subsequently there was conflict on a big scale. Our people have hardened since then and their expectations have risen, especially as the war had ended. We took some risk in presenting proposals now more or less in line with our proposals in April 1942. We knew that many of our people would be grievously disappointed, and yet taking a larger view of national and international problems we decided to stick to what we had said four years ago. For this we were criticized and to some extent condemned.

Even so there remained a big gap between what we said and what the British Government proposed. That gap remains and behind it appear to be incompatible assumptions and premises. Whatever structure we may build now or for the future must have sure foundations and should lead rapidly to the objectives we aim at. More and more we have begun to fear that the British proposals for a provisional government are, from our point of view, based on wrong foundations and there are dangers ahead. Compared even with the talks in Simla in July 1945, when the war was still going on, there is a comedown. It amazes us that the British Government should expect us to accept this position.

None of us want to join any government or council which is more or less a continuation of the present Governor-General's Executive Council. We could have done that years ago if we had been inclined that way. We can only think in terms of a provisional national government functioning as a free government, responsible to a legislature. That government or cabinet must be cohesive and capable of working as a team. The manner in which it is proposed to make it is just to collect odd individuals, who however able (and some of them might well lack even ability) do not form any kind of team. Then the idea of parity is one which repels and will be deeply resented. Curiously enough the kind of parity proposed now is even worse than the kind suggested at Simla last year.[4]

[4] The Congress was not willing to accept parity of representation in the interim government to carry on the administration until the new constitution came into being, because the position had been altered from what it had been a year earlier when it conceded the principle at the Simla Conference, for it now controlled eight of the eleven provincial

In spite of my long conversations with you I have been wholly unable to understand why the British Government still talks as it did many years ago. That talk does not fit in with its professions. Everybody knows that technical and legal difficulties cannot stand in the way of solving vital national problems. Everybody also knows that we do not consider the British Parliament as our guardian and trustee. When it is acknowledged that India is going to be independent soon and the authority of the British Parliament over India will be ended, where is the difficulty in recognizing this as a fact now? There appears to be some snag somewhere which I am unable to understand. Or is it that old habits of mind do not change even with changing conditions? What surprises me greatly is the apparent belief in some people's minds that we do not mean what we say. If that had been so our lives during the last quarter of a century or more would have been very different from what they have actually been. I should have thought that we had sufficiently demonstrated that we were in deadly earnest.

These long-drawn-out conversations have been very exhausting, even more mentally than physically. But during the past month I have been greatly troubled over various developments in the States. If this kind of thing can happen even now in the States, there is something very wrong somewhere, and the whole picture of the immediate future is affected. I cannot imagine that these developments could have taken place without the active or passive concurrence of the Political Department or its agents. . . .

These developments in the States affect the overall States situation in India vitally and their whole future is involved. Only a very foolish person will think that by using the military and declaring martial law, he can solve the States' problem. This is the surest way of aggravating it.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

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governments and representation on a numerical basis had been recognized as the foundation of the constitution-making body.

37

Appeal to Caesar[1]

Mr. Jinnah has appealed to Caesar.[2] But Caesar prefers to remain silent for the present and is waiting and watching developments in India. It is interesting to observe how Caesar functions in relation to his satrapy of India. The two faces of Caesar, so unlike each other and often glaring at each other fiercely and shouting battle-cries, suddenly coalesce and become one when they look at the Indian scene. Mr. Winston Churchill, that emblem of empire on which the sun never sets and the Labourites and Socialists, talking of democracy and freedom and the end of the era of imperialism, foregather together and, while disagreeing on many things, agree about India. Has Mr. Churchill been converted? Or have the Labourites and Socialists succumbed to the weight of British imperial tradition? Or is all this but a game played by Caesar, with his two faces, smiling or frowning alternately, but functioning more or less in the same groove whatever superficial changes might take place?

Mr. Jinnah has appealed to this double-faced Caesar and declaimed at some length at the enormity perpetrated by the Congress, and more especially by the Congress President, in interpreting in their own way the scheme for the constituent assembly.

Caesar has often smiled at Mr. Jinnah in the past and may show his imperial favour again. But the time for dealing with any problem with smiles and frowns is past, and a more positive attitude has to be taken followed by appropriate action.

Why is Mr. Jinnah perturbed and angry? Had he any doubt at any time about the Congress attitude in regard to this or any other matter? Surely in the forest of letters and talks during the past three or four months this Congress attitude has emerged clearly enough. The Congress stands for a sovereign

[1] Editorial. *National Herald,* 16 July 1946.

[2] Jinnah said on 13 July 1946: 'it is understood that there is going to be a debate in the British Parliament very soon on the report of the Cabinet delegation and it is for the British Parliament and His Majesty's Government to make it clear beyond doubt and remove the impression that the Congress has accepted the long-term scheme which is sought to be conveyed abroad by the timid efforts of the Cabinet delegation and the Viceroy, who throughout these negotiations suffered from a fear complex and constant threats of the Congress of resorting to civil disobedience, which is represented by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru . . .".

constituent assembly with no external limitations whatever. The Cabinet Mission points out only two limitations—the minority problem and the Indo-British treaty. These two questions have no doubt to be faced by us but they have nothing to do with British intervention. The Indo-British treaty cannot in the nature of things be imposed by one party or another. It has to be negotiated by free and independent nations desirous of maintaining friendly relations with each other. It is the consequence of independence, not the price of it. For if it is the price in any way, it is an imposition, something forced down upon us against our will and interests, something representing Caesar's continuing dominion over India. That would be the negation of independence.

The minority problem is with us certainly and no one can just wish it away. That is the real limitation in the way of our progress, and it might give trouble in the constituent assembly. We shall have to face it and solve it with goodwill and good sense. But we are not going to appeal to Caesar over this or any other matter and we shall not welcome or indeed tolerate Caesar's interference.

What are the basic features of the proposals for the constituent assembly? Provincial autonomy, certain procedures, certain proposals. Even these can all be set aside by agreement and even as they are, they have been interpreted by the Congress in a way to give the fullest latitude to the basic assumption of the proposals, that is, provincial autonomy. What then is the grievance? It is odd that today the Congress stands for provincial autonomy and the League, which laid stress for so long on residual powers for the provinces, stands for compulsion of the provinces.

The constituent assembly is certainly to some extent a creation of the British power. But even more so it is a creation of circumstances which none can ignore. Taking birth out of the womb of these circumstances, it may well grow of itself and function as it chooses. Who is going to put an end to it or dissolve it? Lawyers and constitutionalists may ponder over these problems, but there is something beyond the lawyer's textbook and precedent in these happenings, and vital forces are at play and sometimes in conflict.

When this happens reality lies elsewhere than in Caesar's trappings. So we suggest to Mr. Jinnah not to look at or appeal to Caesar as of old. For the old order changeth yielding place to new and Caesar too passes into the story of things that have happened and ceased to be.

38

The Call of Destiny[1]

During the last few days I have received a thousand telegrams of greeting and good wishes on the formation of the provisional government.[2] They have come from old friends and comrades and from many whom I do not know. They have come not only from every corner of India but also from various countries of Asia and Europe and America and Africa. They have come from Indians scattered all over the world, often in distant lands, very far from the motherland and yet joined to her by invisible bonds that cannot break. They have come from foreign comrades and friends who look upon India's freedom as a mighty step towards Asia's freedom and world peace.

I am deeply grateful for all these good wishes and I am sorry I cannot acknowledge them separately. I feel in no mood to congratulate myself or others for we have yet to reach our goal and the path is still difficult. Though I am not used to prayer, it is in a prayerful mood that I approach this task, fervently hoping for the cooperation of all my countrymen in facing the difficulties ahead. I regret deeply that the Muslim League has for the moment chosen a different path. I shall continue to hope for their cooperation and the door for it will always be open.

For this business concerns us all and we would be unworthy of the people's confidence if we functioned in a narrow way seeking the good of particular groups or parties and forgetting the larger good of the nation. My colleagues and I go forward as Indians thinking of India, working for India's freedom and the emancipation of her masses. If we forget this at any time then we shall have failed in our endeavour.

Destiny has conspired to test us in new ways and we have answered this call of destiny with courage and faith in India's future. The dream of her freedom that has inspired us for so long beckons to us again and seems nearer of realization. May we prove worthy servants of India and her people. *Jai Hind.*[2]

[1] Statement to the press, Delhi, 1 September 1946. *The Hindustan Times,* 2 September 1946.

[2] The interim government was sworn in on 2 September 1946. Jawaharlal Nehru, taking oath as Vice President of the Interim Government added a *Jai Hind* at the end of his oath. Mahatma Gandhi said that "the door to Purna Swaraj has at last been opened." The supporters of the Muslim League held black flag demonstrations.

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Interim Government[1]

Friends and comrades, *Jai Hind*!

Six days ago my colleagues and I sat on the chairs of high office in the Government of India. A new government came into being in this ancient land, the Interim or Provisional Government we called it, the stepping stone to the full independence of India. Many thousands of messages of greeting and good wishes came to me from all parts of the world and from every nook and corner of India. And yet we asked for no celebration of this historic event and even restrained our people's enthusiasm. For we wanted them to realize that we were yet on the march and the goal had still to be reached. There were many difficulties and obstacles on the way and our journey's end might not be so near as people thought. Any weakness now, any complacency, would be fatal to our cause.

Our hearts were heavy also with the terrible tragedy of Calcutta and because of the insensate strife of brother against brother. The freedom we had envisaged and for which we had laboured through generations of trial and suffering was for all the people of India, and not for one group or class or the followers of one religion. We aimed at a cooperative commonwealth in which all would be equal sharers in opportunity and in all the things that give meaning and value to life. Why then this strife, this fear and suspicion of each other?

I speak to you today not much of high policy or our programme for the future—that will have to wait a while—but to thank you for the love and affection which you have sent us in such abundant measure. That affection and spirit of cooperation are always welcome but they will be needed more than ever in the difficult days ahead of us. A friend sent me the following message: "May you weather every storm, first pilot of the ship of State. Bon voyage". A cheering message but there are many storms ahead and our ship of State is old and battered and slow-moving and unsuited to this age of swift change; it will have to

[1] First broadcast over All India Radio as Vice-President of the Interim Government, 7 September 1946. From *The Hindustan Times*, 8 September and *The Hindu*, 9 September 1946. Excerpts.

be scrapped and give place to another. But however old the ship and however old the pilot, when there are so many millions of willing hearts and hands to help, we can brave the high seas and face the future with confidence.

That future is already taking shape and India, this old dear land of ours, is finding herself again through travail and suffering. She is youthful again with the bright eyes of adventure, and with faith in herself and her mission. For long years she had been narrowly confined and had lost herself in brooding. But now she looks out on the wide world and holds out her hands in friendship to the other peoples of the world even though that world may still be full of conflict and thoughts of war.

The Interim National Government is part of a larger scheme which includes the Constituent Assembly which will meet soon to give shape to the constitution of a free and independent India. It is because of this expectation of an early realization of full independence that we have entered this Government, and we propose to function so as progressively to achieve that independence in action both in our domestic affairs and our foreign relations. We shall take full part in international conference as a free nation with our own policy and not merely as a satellite of another nation. We hope to develop close and direct contacts with other nations and to cooperate with them in the furtherance of world peace and freedom.

We propose, as far as possible, to keep away from the power politics of groups, aligned against one another, which have led in the past to world wars and which may again lead to disasters on an even vaster scale. We believe that peace and freedom are indivisible and the denial of freedom anywhere must endanger freedom elsewhere and lead to conflict and war. We are particularly interested in the emancipation of colonial and dependent countries and peoples, and in the recognition in theory and practice of equal opportunities for all peoples. We repudiate utterly the Nazi doctrine of racialism, wheresoever and in whatever form it may be practised. We seek no dominion over others and we claim no privileged position over other peoples. But we do claim equal and honourable treatment for our people wherever they may go, and we cannot accept any discrimination against them.

The world, in spite of its rivalries and hatreds and inner conflicts, moves inevitably towards closer cooperation and the building up of a world commonwealth. It is for this one world that free India will work, a world in which there is free cooperation of free peoples and no class or group exploits another.

In spite of our past history of conflict, we hope that an independent India will have friendly and cooperative relations with England and the countries of the British Commonwealth. But it is well to remember what is happening in one part of Commonwealth today. In South Africa racialism is the state doctrine and our people are putting up a heroic struggle against the tyranny of

a racial minority.[2] If this racial doctrine is going to be tolerated, it must inevitably lead to vast conflicts and world disasters. . . .

India is on the move and the old order passes. Too long have we been passive spectators of events, the playthings of others. The initiative comes to our people now and we shall make the history of our choice. Let us all join in this mighty task and make of India the pride of our heart, great among nations, foremost in the arts of peace and progress. The door is open and destiny beckons to all. There is no question of who wins and who loses, for we have to go forward and together as comrades and either all of us win or we all go down together. But there is going to be no failure. We go forward to success, to independence and to the freedom and well-being of the four hundred millions of India. *Jai Hind.*

[2] Indians in South Africa had begun a passive resistance movement in June 1946 in protest against the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act, 1946, which sought to restrict acquisition and occupation of the land by Asians in the Natal and Transvaal provinces and denied Indians the right to be elected to either House of the Union Parliament.

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Retention of British Troops[1]

New Delhi, 18 September 1946

Dear Lord Wavell,

Among the outgoing telegrams I saw yesterday a telegram from the Governor-General, War Department, to the Secretary of State for India, London. This telegram stated that in view of the requirements of defence and the political situation in India, the British troops in India should continue to remain here to protect, *inter alia*, specially European lives and property. It was stated that while the general plan of demobilization of the Indian army should continue, the major British units should remain in India. This meant, I take it, that the Indian troops would be demobilized while British troops remained here. This telegram was dated 16th September.[2]

I was astonished to read this for it raised major questions of policy and a decision in regard to them had been taken without any reference to the Cabinet and just two days before the Defence Member was due to arrive here.[3] As you are aware, we have consistently pressed for the withdrawal of the British forces from India. Our attitude in regard to this matter is well known to everybody. It must have been obvious to the War Department and to others concerned that what they were demanding from the Secretary of State was likely to be in direct

[1] To Lord Wavell. *The Transfer of Power, 1942–7*, Vol. 8, pp. 538–9.

[2] "The Government of India have reviewed the internal defence position in India in the light of the present political situation, and though they have decided that demobilization of the Indian Army should proceed as planned, they consider that, having regard to their responsibilities for public order in the country including the protection of European lives and property, any further reduction in the strength of British troops now in India . . . would be most undesirable for the present. They therefore request that plans for the withdrawal of all major British Army units from India either by transfer to another Command or by disbandment should now be held in abeyance for the time being. Furthermore, arrangements should be made to maintain all major British Army units now in India at their present authorized establishments. . . ."

[3] Baldev Singh assumed office as Defence Member on 19 September 1946.

opposition to our wishes. In any event, to come to any such decision without reference to the Cabinet seems to me to have been a case of grave constitutional impropriety and of discourtesy to the Cabinet and to the Defence Member. This must necessarily have far-reaching consequences, both political and financial.[4]

Soon after we took charge, you wrote to me that I should not consider myself in charge of the vacant portfolios till such time as the new members came. I was not eager to add to my burdens as I had more than enough work to do. It was a matter of a few days only and you yourself pointed out that major issues would await the arrival of the new members. So, while I pointed out in my letter to you that I did not appreciate in the changed circumstances the continuation of the old practice to which you referred, I did not attach much importance to a gap of a few days. Our method of working, as you are fully aware, is for all of us to discuss common problems and to arrive at joint decisions for which we all are jointly responsible. There are no reserved subjects apart from those dealt with by the Political Department, and even in regard to these I have ventured to point out to you that there can be no hard and fast line. Any decision in regard to the Political Department has its repercussions on our work. But I do not wish to refer to this aspect of the matter now. Undoubtedly the Defence Department is in charge of the Government of India as at present constituted and it cannot be separated or taken away from Cabinet control simply because the Defence Member has not arrived or is absent for a few days. Any action taken independently of the Cabinet in regard to the Defence Department or any other Department will not only affect our general policy but may also upset our plans, financially or otherwise. Obviously the retention of British troops in India when they were due to leave must add to our present financial burdens and affect our budget.

It is remarkable that while the Members of the Government of India have made it clear that they desire the withdrawal of British troops from India, a request should be made on behalf of the Government of India, without the knowledge of the Cabinet, actually to retain them for a longer period. This must be based on some judgement of the situation or policy with which we are not acquainted. It is difficult for us to function in the dark and be faced with accomplished facts.

I would request you to have this matter placed before an early Cabinet meeting for full consideration. This would involve the whole question of the

[4] In his reply to Nehru on 19 September 1946, Wavell wrote: "Possibly you did not notice that this telegram related to no recent decision but merely repeated a letter of the 29th July approved when the Caretaker Government was in office. I find that by some mistake in the War Department this letter was not issued at the time, and when it was referred to in correspondence the India Office asked for a copy which was sent by telegram."

retention of British troops in India. This incident also makes it clear that it is essential for the Cabinet to remain in the closest touch with developments in the Defence Department and to control the policy underlying them.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

41

Aims and Objectives of the Constituent Assembly[1]

For a long time we have been having various plans for a free India in our minds, but now, when we are beginning the actual work, I hope, you will be at one with me when I say, that we should present a clear picture of this plan to ourselves, to the people of India and to the world at large. The resolution that I am placing before you defines our aims, describes an outline of the plans and points the way which we are going to tread.

You all know that this Constituent Assembly is not what many of us wished it to be. It has come into being under particular conditions and the British Government has a hand in its birth. They have attached to it certain conditions. We accepted the State Paper, which may be called the foundation of this Assembly, after serious deliberations and we shall endeavour to work within its limits. But you must not ignore the source from which this Assembly derives its strength. Governments do not come into being by State Papers. Governments are, in fact, the expression of the will of the people. We have met here today because of the strength of the people behind us and we shall go as far as the people—not of any party or group but the people as a whole—shall wish us to go. We should, therefore, always keep in mind the passions that lie in the hearts of the masses of the Indian people and try to fulfil them. . . .

The resolution that I am placing before you is in the nature of a pledge. It has been drafted after mature deliberation and efforts have been made to avoid controversy. A great country is sure to have a lot of controversial issues; but we have tried to avoid controversy as much as possible. The resolution deals with fundamentals which are commonly held and have been accepted by the people. I do not think this resolution contains anything which was outside the limitations laid down by the British Cabinet or anything which may be disagreeable to any Indian, no matter to what party or group he belongs. Unfortunately our country is full of differences, but no one, except perhaps a few, would dispute the fundamentals which this resolution lays down. The resolution states that

[1] Speech in the Constituent Assembly, 13 December 1946. *Constituent Assembly Debates. Official Report*, Vol. I, 1946, 9 to 23 December 1946, pp. 55–62. Excerpts.

it is our firm and solemn resolve to have a sovereign Indian republic. We have not mentioned the word 'republic' till this time; but you will well understand that a free India can be nothing but a republic.

On this occasion, when the representatives of the Indian States are not present, I desire to make it clear how this resolution will affect the Indian States. It has also been suggested, and the suggestion may take the form of an amendment laying down that since certain sections of the House are not present, the consideration of the resolution may be postponed. In my opinion, such an amendment is not in keeping with the spirit of the times, because if we do not approve the first objective that we are placing before ourselves, before our country and before the world at large, our deliberations will become meaningless and lifeless, and the people will have no interest in our work. Our intention regarding the States must be clearly understood. We do desire that all sections of India should willingly participate in the future Indian Union but in what way and with what sort of government rests with them. The resolution does not go into these details. It contains only the fundamentals. It imposes nothing on the States against their will. The point to be considered is how they will join us and what sort of administration they will have. I do not wish to express my personal opinion on the matter. Nevertheless I must say that no State can have an administration which goes against our fundamental principles or gives less freedom than obtaining in other parts of India. The resolution does not concern itself with what form of government they will have or whether the present Rajas and Nawabs will continue or not. These things concern the people of the States. It is quite possible that the people may like to have their Rajas. The decision will rest with them. Our republic shall include the whole of India. If a part within it desires to have its own type of administration it will be at liberty to have it. . . .

I hope the House will pass the resolution which is of a special nature. It is an undertaking with ourselves and with the millions of our brothers and sisters who live in this great country. If it is passed, it will be a sort of pledge that we shall have to carry out. With this expectation and in this form, I place it before you. . . .

I beg to move:

(1) This Constituent Assembly declares its firm and solemn resolve to proclaim India as an Independent Sovereign Republic and to draw up for her future governance a Constitution;

(2) Wherein the territories that now comprise British India, the territories that now form the Indian States as well as such other territories as are willing to be constituted into the Independent Sovereign India, shall be a Union of them all; and

(3) Wherein the said territories, whether with their present boundaries or with such others as may be determined by the Constituent Assembly and

thereafter according to the Law of the Constitution, shall possess and retain the status of autonomous units, together with residuary powers, and exercise all powers and functions of government and administration, save and except such powers and functions as are vested in or assigned to the Union, or as are inherent or implied in the Union or resulting therefrom; and

(4) Wherein all power and authority of the Sovereign Independent India, its constituent parts and organs of government, are derived from the people; and

(5) Wherein shall be guaranteed and secured to all the people of India justice, social, economic and political; equality of status, of opportunity, and before the law; freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith, worship, vocation, association and action, subject to law and public morality; and

(6) Wherein adequate safeguards shall be provided for minorities, backward and tribal areas, and depressed and other backward classes; and

(7) Wherein shall be maintained the integrity of the territory of the Republic and its Sovereign rights on land, sea, and air according to justice and the law of civilized nations, and

(8) this ancient land attain its rightful and honoured place in the world and make its full and willing contribution to the promotion of world peace and the welfare of mankind.

Sir, this is the fifth day of this first session of the Constituent Assembly. Thus far we have laboured on certain provisional and procedural matters which are essential. We have a clear field to work upon; we have to prepare the ground and we have been doing that these few days. We have still much to do. We have to pass our rules of procedure and to appoint committees and the like, before we can proceed to the real step, to the real work of this Constituent Assembly, that is the high advance of giving shape, in the printed and written word, to a nation's dream and aspiration. But even now, at this stage it is surely desirable that we should give some indication to ourselves, to those who look to this Assembly, to those millions in this country who are looking up to us and to the world at large, as to what we may do, what we seek to achieve, whither we are going. It is with this purpose that I have placed this resolution before this House. It is a resolution and yet, it is something much more than a resolution. It is a declaration. It is a firm resolve. It is a pledge and an undertaking and it is for all of us I hope a dedication. And I wish this House, if I may say so respectfully, should consider this resolution not in a spirit of narrow legal wording, but rather to look at the spirit behind that resolution. Words are magic things often enough, but even the magic of words sometimes cannot convey the magic of the human spirit and of a nation's passion. And so, I cannot say that this resolution at all conveys the passion that lies in the hearts and the minds of the Indian people today. It seeks very feebly to tell the world of what we have thought or dreamt of so long, and what we now hope to achieve in the House

and it is in that spirit that I trust the House will receive it and ultimately pass it. And may I, Sir, also, with all respect, suggest to you and to the House, that, when the time comes for the passing of this resolution let it be not done in the formal way by the raising of hands, but much more solemnly, by all of us standing up and thus taking this pledge anew. . . .

As I stand here, Sir, I feel the weight of all manner of things crowding around me. We are at the end of an era and possibly very soon we shall embark upon a new age; and my mind goes back to the great past of India, to the 5,000 years of India's history, from the very dawn of that history which might be considered almost the dawn of human history, till today. All that past crowds around me and exhilarates me and, at the same time, somewhat oppresses me. Am I worthy of that past? When I think also of the future, the greater future I hope, standing on this sword's edge of the present between this mighty past and the mightier future, I tremble a little and feel overwhelmed by this mighty task. We have come here at a strange moment in India's history. I do not know but I do feel that there is some magic in this moment of transition from the old to the new, something of that magic which one sees when the night turns into day and even though the day may be a cloudy one, it is day after all, for when the clouds move away, we can see the sun later on. Because of all this I find a little difficulty in addressing this House and putting all my ideas before it and I feel also that in this long succession of thousands of years, I see the mighty figures that have come and gone and I see also the long succession of our comrades who have laboured for the freedom of India. And now we stand on the verge of this passing age, trying, labouring to usher in the new. I am sure the House will feel the solemnity of this moment and will endeavour to treat this resolution which it is my proud privilege to place before it in that solemn manner. . . .

Our past is witness to what we are doing here and though the future is still unborn, the future too somehow looks at us, I think, and so, I would beg of this House to consider this resolution in this mighty prospect of our past, of the turmoil of the present and of the great and unborn future that is going to take place soon. Sir, I beg to move.

42

The Many Forms of Struggle[1]

If we look around Asia today, we see conflict over wide areas in many countries. Here in India we live in the midst of conflict and struggle, though for the moment that conflict and struggle may not be so obvious to an outsider. Obviously when a country is deprived of its freedom, there are only two choices left to it; one is to submit ignobly and the other is to struggle and fight for freedom. There is no middle course and a country that finally submits ceases to have any soul or spirit. The ways of conflict and struggle may be many, but the point is that the spirit of the people should be in a continual state of revolt against submission. How that revolt takes shape or what methods it employs is a matter to be decided in view of the circumstances.

So in India today you see a curious picture of some of us being associated with the Government of India, some of our colleagues running provincial governments and yet at the same time in a sense we are still in opposition in so far as we have to carry on the struggle for freedom. I do not know what the next few months may bring to us, what steps the country may have to take in order to assert her freedom or to achieve it. But one thing is certain that we are today in a process of struggle.

Your idea of struggle apparently is shouting and marching in the streets. That may take place sometimes and other things may also take place sometimes, but when a nation struggles, it does not merely shout. When two mighty forces come into conflict, there are many ways of struggle and I tell you that today in India the struggle for freedom is going on as intensely as it has ever gone on. You have to realize that fact and not wait supinely for some future time when an order is issued and you perform publicly in the market place or in fields or factories. The nature of the struggle may be different today; it may change its shape and form tomorrow. We are functioning differently because our nation has grown.

We are, it is often said, on the verge of complete independence. So we are. But remember this, that when you are often right near the walls of a citadel

[1] Address to the All India Students' Congress, Delhi, 31 December 1946. From *The Hindustan Times*, 1 January, *The Hindu* and *The Free Press Journal*, 2 January 1947. Excerpts.

which you hope to capture very soon, still the walls may intervene and you may have to face your stiffest fight there. But the point is that you must not think of the struggle merely in terms of demonstrations or public activities of that type. If you work, if you organize, that is part of the struggle; if you refuse to submit to injustice, that is part of the struggle.

The final climax of it may be something else, but the final climax only comes when you have brought the struggle to a certain pitch. That struggle goes on today and though I am in the Government of India, I am as much part of that struggle and carrying on that struggle as I have ever been in my life.

In the conception of the present state of India you see that struggle in many shapes and forms. You see reactionary elements in India lining up with foreign elements and trying to impede our march forward. All that becomes part of the struggle. So you must see the complete picture and prepare yourself to face that in an ordered, organized and disciplined way. We must function as an organized nation and not lose ourselves in petty squabbles. . . .

You all talk of Asia. What concept of Asia have you got? Asia is the mother of continents. Asia has been the mother of culture in this world. The beginnings of history have been in Asia, and if you look at the long history of humanity you will find that for vast periods it was Asia that was not only the dominating force in the world in cultural and other matters but also in the military sense.

For the last 200 years or so the fate of Asia has gone under eclipse, not so much because Europe dominates it, but for some reason or the other Asiatics became static and dormant and other people who were more vigorous went ahead.

Today we see a renaissance of Asia. Asia is waking up again. It is going through pains and trouble, but the fundamental fact about Asiatic countries that we notice today is this new vitality, this dynamic personality of the ancient mother of continents functioning again. The new Asia will be what young men and young women make of it.

So I should like you to give this message to our friends from abroad.[2] This is a message not only of freedom for Asia but a message of unity of Asia. We do not want this unity to fight against any other continent or country or people. We want unity certainly for our own defence but more so for friendly and peaceful living and for setting an example to others as to how we can combine modern progress with ancient culture which gave peace and equanimity to the countries of Asia. . . .

My advice to you is to divert your energies towards doing constructive work rather than getting offices for personal aggrandizement. I am very much pained to see factionalism and lack of discipline among students. It would not matter if big differences were on fundamental principles, because in a big country like India, there should be unity in diversity, but I feel that personal

[2] Delegates from several Asian countries were present at the meeting.

ends alone and not the larger good of the organization are at the back of the dispute. I have been told many times that students are ready to advance like an army the moment they get my orders. But I want to remind them that the first essentials of an army are unity and discipline which, I am sorry to say, I do not find in them. A great responsibility has to fall on your shoulders very soon. Are you capable of bearing it? Be prepared for that. I do not know what to do with the gold platter which has been presented to me as I have no connection with gold. I like iron because it is required in industries. I want your hearts to be of iron. Presentation of gold means that you are in the old world.

43

On Transference of Power[1]

1. The Working Committee welcome the declaration made on behalf of the British Government of their definite intention to transfer power finally by a date not later than June 1948 and to take steps to that end in advance. Such a transfer involves the complete withdrawal of British troops from India before that date. In order to carry out this withdrawal progressively and effectively, steps should be taken to begin the process as early as possible, and also to replace British officers in the Indian army by Indian officers. Some British officers may, however, be retained in an advisory capacity.

2. The transfer of power, in order to be smooth, should be preceded by the recognition in practice of the Interim Government as a Dominion Government, with effective control over the services and administration, and the Viceroy and Governor-General functioning as the constitutional head of the Government. The Central Government must necessarily function as a cabinet with joint responsibility. Any other arrangement is incompatible with good government and is peculiarly dangerous during a transitional period full of political and economic crises. The experience of the past few months has demonstrated that the lack of joint cabinet responsibility leads to inefficiency and disjointedness in the administration and a feeling of uncertainty in the country.

3. The country is facing today grave crises, both political and economic, and the position in regard to food and coal[2] is extremely serious, requiring swift and effective handling. Any lack of cohesion at the centre is likely to have grave results. The period of transition should also be as brief as possible, as a prolongation of it will lead to further uncertainty and instability, and a deterioration of the situation.

4. The Congress has already expressed its full acceptance of the British Cabinet Mission's Scheme of May 16, 1946 and has further accepted the

[1] Jawaharlal Nehru's hand-written Draft for the Working Committee, Delhi, 8 March 1947.

[2] The White Paper issued by the British Government on 2 April 1946, said that the failure of rains, a cyclone and a tidal wave had resulted in sharp drop in grain production and had increased the estimate of India's imported cereal requirements in 1946 from 1500,000 to over 4000,000 tons.

interpretations put upon it by the British Cabinet on December 6, 1946. In accordance therewith, the Constituent Assembly has begun functioning and has appointed various committees to carry on its work. It has become urgently necessary now to expedite this work so that the constitution for an Indian Union and its constituent units should be finally prepared and given effect to well within the stated period to facilitate the final transfer of power.

5. The Working Committee welcome the decision of many of the States to join the Constituent Assembly and trust that all the States and their peoples will be effectively represented in this task of making a constitution for an Indian Union. They would invite afresh the representatives of the Muslim League, who have been elected to the Constituent Assembly, to join in this historic task. The work of the Constituent Assembly is essentially voluntary, and the constitution that will be framed must represent the joint and integrated will of all those who participate.

6. The Working Committee have frequently stated that there can or should be no compulsion in the making of or the giving effect to a constitution for India. It is the fear of compulsion and coercion that has given rise to distrust and suspicion and conflict. If this fear goes, as it must, it will be easy to determine India's future so as to safeguard the rights of all communities and give equal opportunities to all. It must be understood that the constitution framed by the Constituent Assembly will apply only to those areas who accept it. It must also be understood that any area which accepts this constitution and desire to join the Union cannot be prevented from doing so. Thus there must be no compulsion either way, and the people will themselves decide their future. This peaceful and cooperative method is the only way to decide democratically and with the maximum of consent. It is clear that no political party in India can gain its ends by violent and coercive methods, for violence invokes further violence and conflict and results in misery and grievous injury to the nation and all the parties concerned.

7. In this hour when final decisions have to be taken, and the future of India has to be shaped by Indian minds and hands, the Working Committee earnestly call upon all parties and groups, and all Indians generally, to discard violent and coercive methods, and cooperate together peacefully and democratically in the making of a constitution, on the understanding that there should be no compulsion of any area. No one's interests can be injured in this way, and it may well be that a mutually satisfactory solution will be found. In any event a solution will be found for the time for decision has come and no one can stop it or stand by and remain unaffected. The end of an era is at hand and a new age will soon begin. Let this dawn of the new age be ushered in bravely, leaving hates and discords in the dead past.

44

On the Constitutional Proposals[1]

Today I am speaking to you on a historic occasion, when a vital change affecting the future of India is proposed. You have just heard an announcement on behalf of the British Government. This announcement lays down the procedure for self-determination in certain areas of India. It envisages on the one hand the possibility of these areas seceding from India; on the other, it promises a big advance towards complete independence. Such a big change must have the full concurrence of the people before effect can be given to it, for it must always be remembered that the future of India can only be decided by the people of India and not by any outside authority, however friendly. These proposals will be placed soon before the representative assemblies of the people for consideration. But meanwhile the sands of time run out and decisions cannot await the normal course of events. So, while we must necessarily abide by what the people finally decide, we have to come to certain decisions ourselves, and to recommend them to the people for acceptance. We have, therefore, decided to accept these proposals and to recommend to our larger Committees, that they do likewise. It is with no joy in my heart that I commend these proposals to you, though I have no doubt in my mind that this is the right course, for generations we have dreamt and struggled for a free and independent united India. The proposals to allow certain parts to secede, if they so will, is painful for any of us to contemplate. Nevertheless, I am convinced that our present decision is the right one even from the larger viewpoint. The united India that we have laboured for was not one of compulsion and coercion, but a free and a willing association of free people. It may be that in this way we shall reach that united India sooner than otherwise and that she will have a stronger and more secure foundation. We are little men serving great causes, but because the cause is great, something of that greatness falls upon us also. Mighty forces are at work in the world today and in India, and I have no doubt that we are ushering in a period of greatness for India. The India of geography, of history and tradition, the India of our minds and hearts, cannot change. On this historic occasion each one of us must pray that he might be guided aright in the service of the motherland and of

[1] Broadcast to the Nation, 3 June 1947. JN Papers, NMML. Excerpts.

humanity at large. We stand on a watershed, dividing the past from the future. Let us bury that past in so far as it is bad and forget all bitterness and recrimination. Let there be moderation in speech and writing. Let there be strength and perseverance in adhering to the cause and the ideals we have at heart. Let us face the future not with easy optimism or with any complacency or weakness but with confidence and a firm faith in India.

There has been violence—shameful, degrading and revolting violence—in various parts of the country. This must end. We are determined to end it. We must make it clear that political ends are not to be achieved by methods of violence now or in the future. On this, the eve of great changes in India, we have to make a fresh start with clear vision and a firm mind with steadfastness and tolerance and a stout heart. We should not wish ill to anyone, but think always of every Indian as our brother and comrade. The good of the four hundred millions of India must be our supreme objective. We shall seek to build anew our relations with England on a friendly and cooperative basis, forgetting the past which has lain so heavily upon us.

45

The Unavoidability of Partition[1]

Friends and Comrades, *Jai Hind*!

India's heart has been broken but her essential unity has not been destroyed. How will you repair the broken heart? It can be only on the basis of a programme. . . .

Now it would be a futile controversy to go into the merits of Dominion Status *versus* independence. The most urgent task at present is to arrest the swift drift towards anarchy and chaos. Disruptive forces are at work and the most important disruptive force is that of the Muslim League. Our first task should be the establishment of a strong Central government to rule the country firmly and to assure the individual's liberty and life. All other questions are of secondary importance.

There is no question of any surrender to the Muslim League and what myself and my colleagues have agreed to is that the issue of partition should be referred to the people for a verdict. There is nothing novel in the plan for partition. The House will remember Rajaji's formula[2] on the basis of which Mahatma Gandhi carried on negotiations with Mr. Jinnah. At that time myself and my colleagues were in the Ahmednagar Fort. We discussed the question in prison. While we disagreed with the approach to the whole question, there was no disagreement on the fundamentals of the formula. It must be realized that it is not possible to coerce even with swords unwilling parts to remain under the Indian domain. If they are forced to stay in the Union no progress and planning will be possible. We must take the warning from China.[3] Continued internal strife and turmoil will bring progress of a nation to a standstill. In arriving at a decision we must look at the international context as well. The picture of the world today is one of destruction and impoverishment which by

[1] Speech at the AICC meeting in New Delhi on 15 June 1947 on the Working Committee resolution accepting the 3 June statement. From *National Herald*, 16 June 1947.

[2] On 23 April 1942 Rajagopalachari secured the passage of two resolutions by the Congress members of the Madras Legislature recommending to the A.I.C.C. that Congressmen acknowledge the Muslim League's claim for separation and that negotiations be immediately started with the League for the "purpose of arriving at an agreement and securing the installation of a national Government to meet the present emergency."

[3] In China, which was much weakened at the close of the Second World War, a civil war raged through 1946 between the Nationalists and the Communists.

itself may prevent an immediate war but one can never say what will happen in the future.

The Congress cannot afford to act in an irresponsible manner by passing high-sounding resolutions. A responsible body must not think in terms of today only, but there is a tomorrow and a day after that. It will be ridiculous to suggest that the British would do everything before they quit. The June 3 statement could not have come about had there been no agreement. It is not an imposed award. Circumstances were such that the Congress agreed to it. It is not like one of those old decisions of the British Government which we could accept or reject. The acceptance for which I am wholly responsible does not mean that I agree to every word in the statement but I agree with the fundamental principles therein.

The riots in Rawalpindi, Multan, Amritsar, Calcutta, Noakhali, Bihar and elsewhere present the situation in a different light. To suggest that the Congress Working Committee took fright and therefore "surrendered" is wrong. But it is correct to say that they are very much disturbed at the prevailing madness. Homesteads burnt, women and children murdered; and why are all these tragic and brutal things happening? We could have checked them by resorting to the sword and the lathi but would that solve the problem? Some people from the Punjab said that the Congress had let them down. What did they want me to do? Should I send an army? I am sad and bitter and India's heart is broken. The victims in Rawalpindi said that they were being killed in order that the League might rule. The wound must be healed. With whatever we are able to salvage, we must plan out a programme on the basis of partition.

It is sufficient for the House to compare what happened in Noakhali and Calcutta and again what happened in Bihar. By supreme efforts the Congress was able to control the situation in Bihar but they could do nothing in the Punjab. Why did such things happen in the Punjab and why was the Khizr Ministry broken and how was it no one seemed to be capable of controlling the Punjab disturbances? The answer is patent. The Congress Working Committee passed a resolution in favour of the partition of the Punjab into two administrative provinces.[4] Partition is better than murder of innocent citizens. After the resolution was passed, the Committee received numerous complaints from Bengal that Bengal also should be divided. The underlying principle in the case of the Punjab and Bengal is one and the same.

It is wrong to suggest that I and two others decided the fate of millions. The Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and other responsible organizations in the province strongly supported the partition proposal.[5]

The next question that arose was, having divided the Punjab and Bengal, has the Congress abandoned the Sikhs and the Hindus? An answer should be

[4] On 8 March 1947.

[5] The Bengal Provincial Congress Committee passed a resolution on 4 April 1947 demanding the partition of Bengal.

found. By high-sounding resolutions the Congress will not be able to help them. Even when the Punjab was one they were not able to help the people. An answer to this problem will no doubt be found. However, there is no reason why the minorities there should be tyrannized and persecuted. There may be individual cases of rioting but there is not much room in future for organized attacks on the minorities. I have nothing much to say about Sind and, so far as Sylhet is concerned, there is to be a referendum and I cannot forecast the result.[6] I am much worried about the N.W.F.P. If Bengal and Punjab went out, the Frontier would be isolated. The question is now the subject of consultation between the Committee and the Frontier leaders.

Government authority in the country has almost collapsed. The British are no longer interested because they are leaving. This probably explains why some officers asked the victims who went to them for help to come to me or Sardar Patel for help. They are not desirous of shouldering any further responsibility and many have become callous.

Any controversy over the question of Dominion Status *versus* independence is meaningless. What the Congress demanded was that the government should function as a Dominion Government and conventions must be established. The acceptance of Dominion Status was without prejudice to the republic resolution adopted by the Constituent Assembly. But the composition of the present Government is such that no agreement can work and no convention can be established and the Viceroy, therefore, suggested the June 3 statement and the Congress accepted it.

All talk of Pakistan and Hindustan is due to a misunderstanding. Both from practical and legal points of view India as an entity continues to exist except that certain provinces and parts of certain provinces now seek to secede. The seceding are free to have any relations they like with foreign Powers. The Government of India is intact and there should be no further confusion of Hindustan and Pakistan and people should not allow such ideas to grow.

The present, perhaps, is the most difficult period full of trials and tribulations. Today we have to shoulder responsibility. The first thing we have to do is to establish the independence of India firmly and set up a strong Central government. Having established a strong and stable government, all other programmes will not create much difficulty. The Congress has a heavy responsibility. You must bend all your energies to strengthen the Congress organization. We have to face dangers, both external and internal, and if we are not strong we will go down. . . .

I would ask the A.I.C.C. not to vote for the resolution out of any sympathy for the Working Committee but they must do so out of conviction.

[6] The referendum in the Sylhet district of Assam, held on 6 and 7 July, resulted in a majority of 55,578 in favour of joining the East Bengal territory of Pakistan, 239,619 votes being cast for union with Pakistan and 184,041 for remaining in India.

46

Resolution on the National Flag[1]

Mr. President, it is my proud privilege to move the following resolution:

> Resolved that the National Flag of India shall be horizontal tricolour of deep saffron (*Kesri*), white and dark green in equal proportion. In the centre of the white band, there shall be a wheel in navy blue to represent the charkha. The design of the wheel shall be that of the wheel (charkha) which appears on the abacus of the Sarnath Lion Capital of Asoka.[2]
>
> The diameter of the Wheel shall approximate to the width of the white band. The ratio of the width to the length of the Flag shall ordinarily be 2:3.

This resolution, Sir, is in simple language, in a slightly technical language and there is no glow or warmth in the words that I have read. Yet I am sure that many in this House will feel that glow and warmth which I feel at the present moment, for behind this resolution and the Flag which I have the honour to present to this House for adoption lies history, the concentrated history of a short span in a nation's existence. Nevertheless, sometimes in a brief period we pass through the track of centuries. It is not so much the mere act of living that counts but what one does in this brief life that is ours; it is not so much the mere existence of a nation that counts but what that nation does during the various periods of its existence; and I do venture to claim that in the past quarter of a century or so India has lived and acted in a concentrated way and the emotions which have filled the people of India represent not merely a brief spell of years but something infinitely more. They have gone down into history and tradition and have added themselves on to that vast history and tradition which is our heritage in this country. So, when I move this resolution, I think of this concentrated history through which all of us have passed during the last quarter of a century. Memories crowd in upon me. I remember the ups and downs of the great struggle for freedom of this great nation. I remember and many in this House will remember how we looked up to this Flag not only with pride and

[1] Speech in the Constituent Assembly, 22 July 1947, *Constituent Assembly Debates, Official Report*, Vol. IV, 1947, pp. 761–7. Excerpts.

[2] The wheel represents the Buddhist Dharma Chakra and was used as an emblem by Asoka in the 3rd century BC.

enthusiasm but with a tingling in our veins; also how, when we were sometimes down and out, then again the sight of this Flag gave us courage to go on. Then, many who are present here today, many of our comrades who have passed, held on to this Flag, some amongst them even unto death and handed it over, as they sank, to others to hold it aloft. So in this simple form of words, there is much more than will be clear on the surface. There is the struggle of the people for freedom with all its ups and downs and trials and disasters and there is finally today as I move this resolution, a certain triumph about it—a measure of triumph in the conclusion of that struggle.

Now, I realize fully, as this House must realize, that this triumph of ours has been marred in many ways. There have been, especially in the past few months, many happenings which cause us sorrow, which has gripped our hearts. We have seen parts of this dear motherland of ours cut off from the rest. We have seen large numbers of people suffering tremendously, large numbers wandering about like waifs and strays, without a home. We have seen many other things which I need not repeat to this House, but which we cannot forget. All this sorrow has dogged our footsteps. Even when we have achieved victory and triumph, it still dogs us and we have tremendous problems to face in the present and in the future. Nevertheless it is true I think—I hold it to be true—that this moment does represent a triumph and a victorious conclusion of all our struggles, for the moment. . . .

We have attained that objective or shall attain it very soon. Of that there is no doubt. We have not attained the objective exactly in the form in which we wanted it. The troubles and other things that accompanied our achievement are not to our liking. But we must remember that it is very seldom that people realize the dreams that they have dreamt. It is very seldom that the aims and objectives with which we start are achieved in their entirety in life, in an individual's life or in a nation's life.

Look at any country in the wide world. Where is the country today, including the great and big powers, which is not full of terrible problems, which is not in some way, politically and economically, striving for freedom which somehow or other eludes its grasp? The problems of India in the wider context do not appear to be terrible. The problems are not anything new to us. We have faced many disagreeable things in the past. We have not held back. We shall face all the other disagreeable things that face us in the present or may do so in the future and we shall not flinch and we shall not falter and we shall not quit.

So, in spite of everything that surrounds us, it is in no spirit of downheartedness that I stand up in praise of this nation for what it has achieved. It is right and proper that at this moment we should adopt the symbol of this achievement, the symbol of freedom. Now what is this freedom in its entirety and for all humanity? What is freedom and what is the struggle for freedom and when does it end? As soon as you take one step forward and achieve something, further

steps come up before you. There will be no full freedom in this country or in the world as long as a single human being is unfree. There will be no complete freedom as long as there is starvation, hunger, lack of clothing, lack of necessaries of life and lack of opportunity for growth for every single human being, man, woman and child in the country. We aim at that. We may not accomplish that because it is a terrific task. But we shall do our utmost to accomplish that task and hope that our successors, when they come, will have an easier path to pursue. But there is no ending to that road to freedom. As we go ahead just as we sometimes in our vanity aim at perfection, perfection never comes. But if we try hard enough we do approach the goal by step. When we increase the happiness of the people, we increase their stature in many ways and we proceed to our goal. I do not know if there is an end to this or not, but we proceed towards some kind of consummation which in effect never ends.

So I present this Flag to you. . . . We thought of a design for a Flag which was beautiful, because the symbol of a nation must be beautiful to look at. We thought of a Flag which would in its combination and in its separate parts would somehow represent the spirit of the nation, the tradition of the nation, that mixed spirit and tradition which has grown up through thousands of years in India. So we devised this Flag. Perhaps I am partial but I do think that it is a very beautiful Flag to look at purely from the point of view of artistry, and it has come to symbolize many other beautiful things, things of the spirit, things of the mind, that give value to the individual's life and to the nation's life, for a nation does not live merely by material things, although they are highly important. It is important that we should have the good things of the world, the material possessions of the world, that our people should have the necessaries of life. That is of the utmost importance. Nevertheless, a nation, and especially a nation like India with an immemorial past, lives by other things also, the things of the spirit. If India had not been associated with these ideals and things of the spirit during these thousands of years, what would India have been? It has gone through a very great deal of misery and degradation in the past, but somehow even in the depths of degradation, the head of India has been held high, the thought of India has been high, and the ideals of India have been high. So we have gone through these tremendous ages and we stand up today in proud thankfulness for our past and even more so for the future that is to come for which we are going to work and for which our successors are going to work. It is our privilege and of those assembled here to mark the transition in a particular way, in a way that will be remembered. . . .

Therefore this Flag that I have the honour to present to you is not, I hope and trust, a Flag of empire, a Flag of imperialism, a Flag of domination over anybody, but a Flag of freedom not only for ourselves, but a symbol of freedom to all people who may see it. And wherever it may go—and I hope it will go far,—not only where Indians dwell as our ambassadors and ministers but across

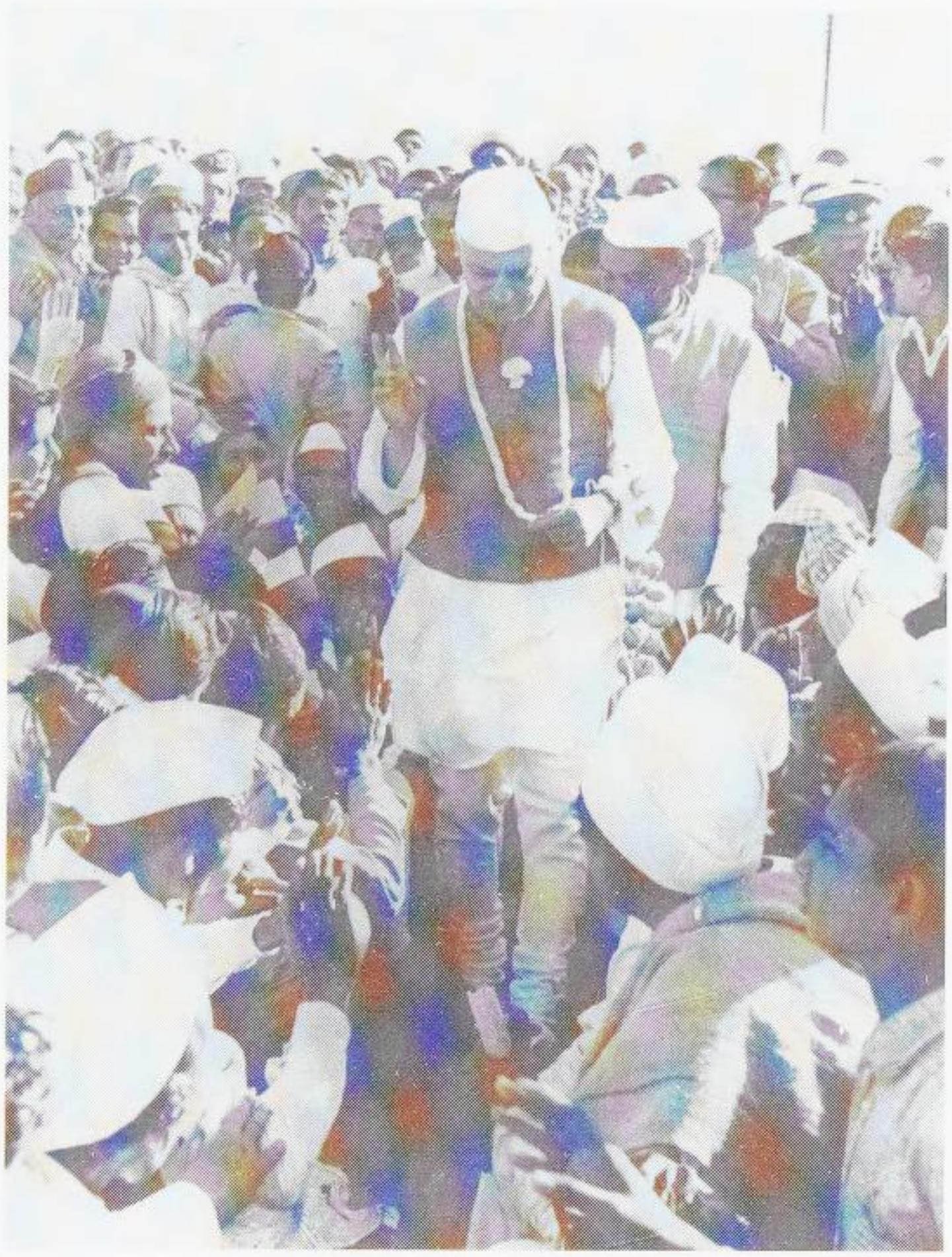

Plate1: With his people

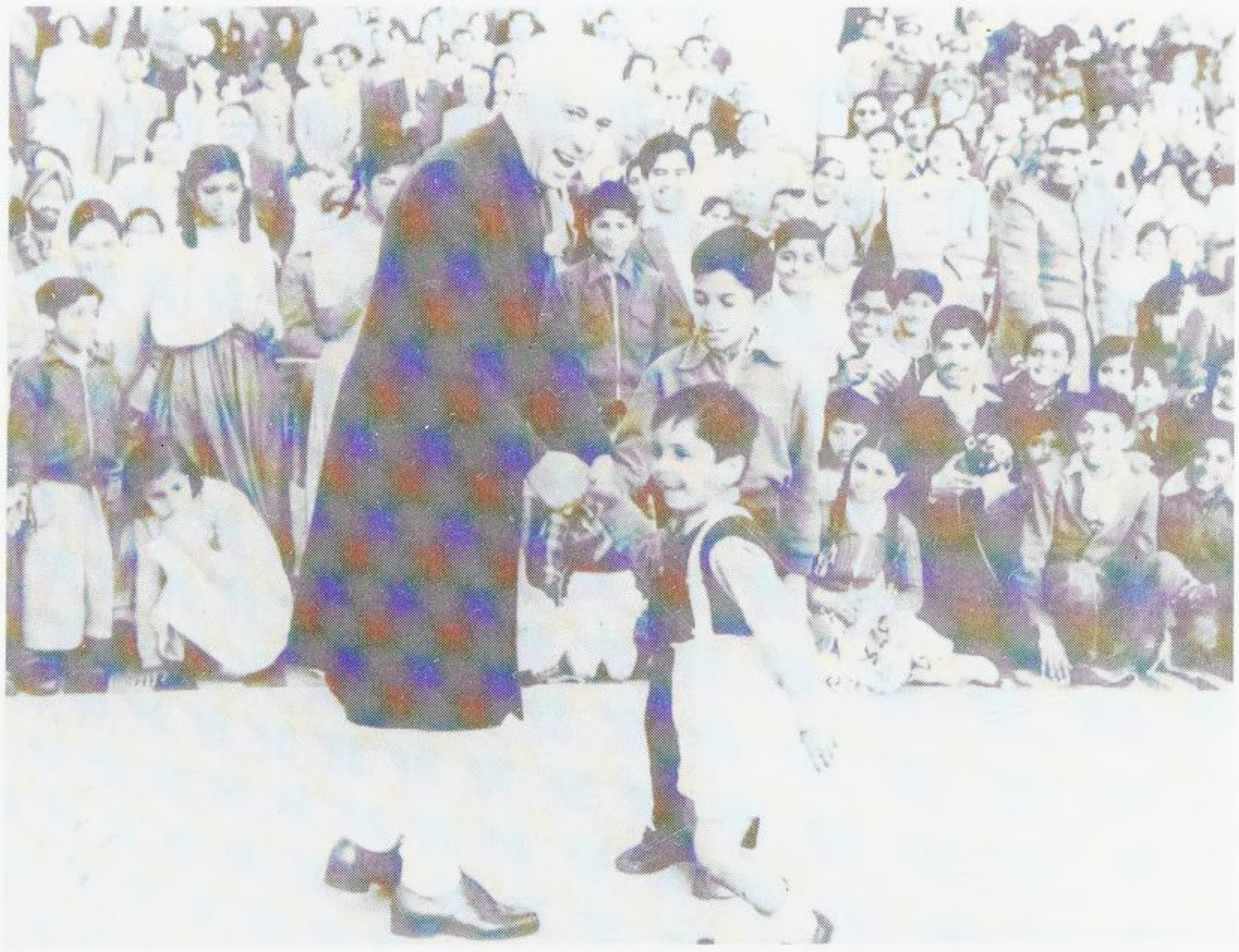

Plate 2: With children

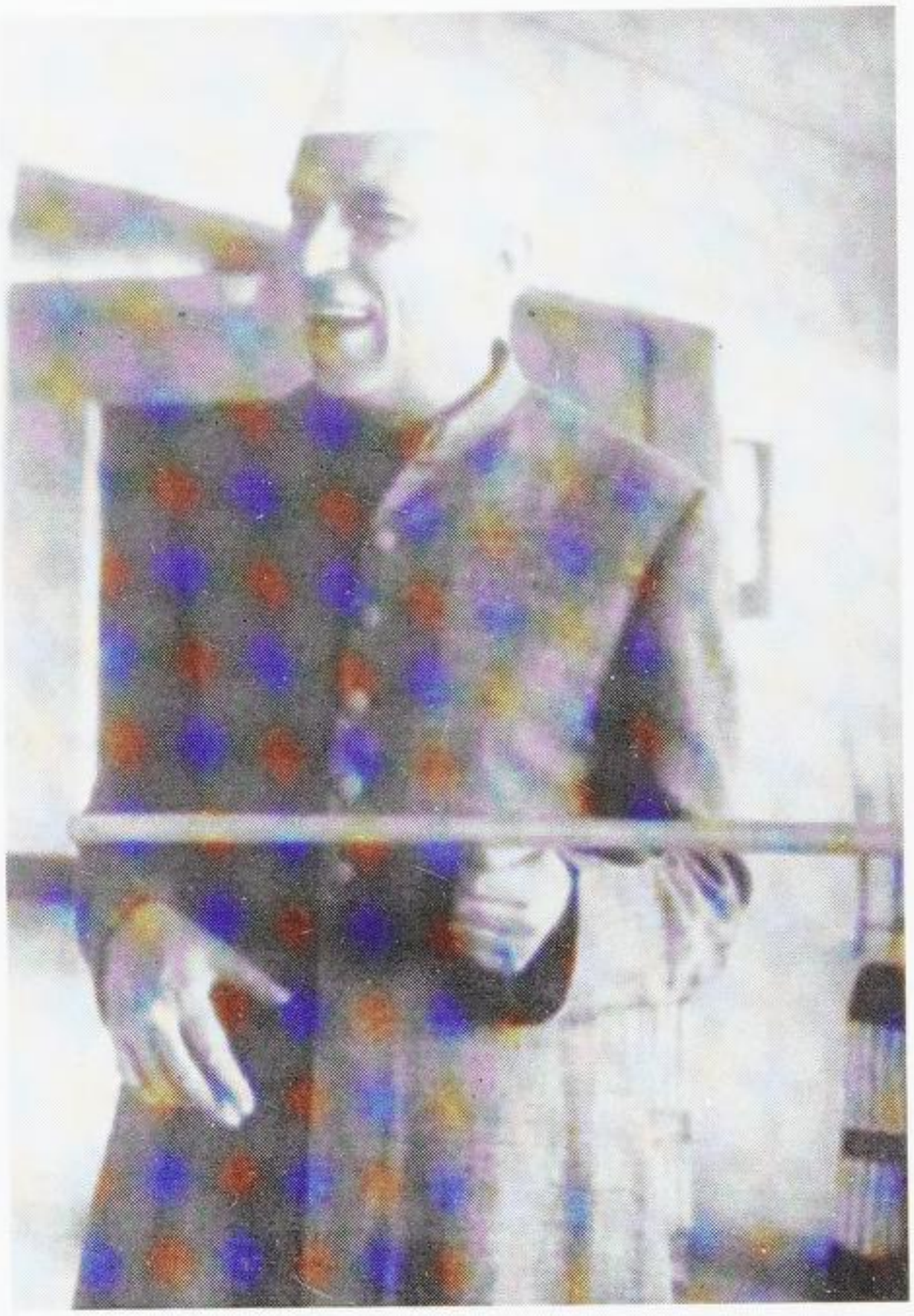

Plate 3

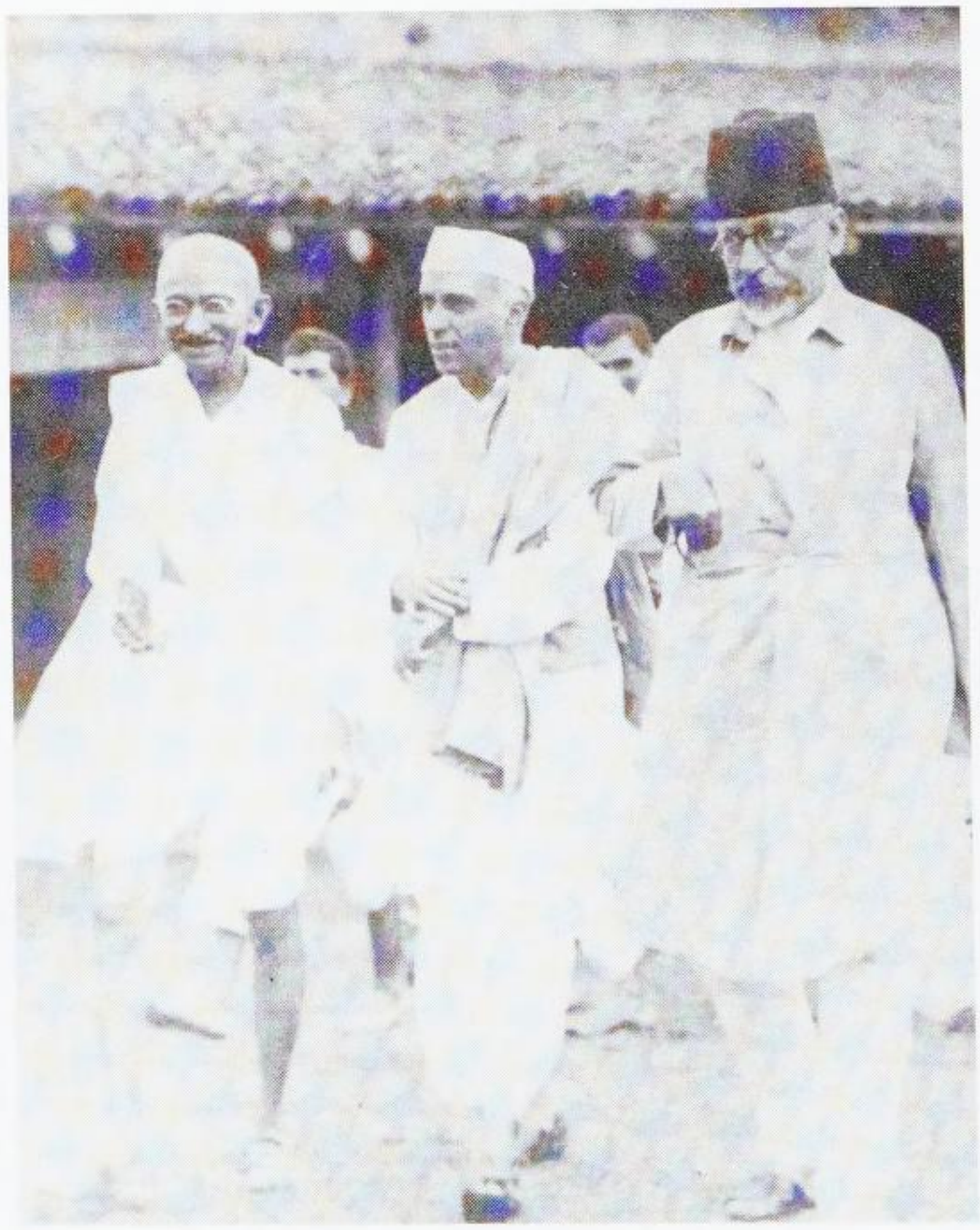

Plate 4: With Gandhiji and Abul Kalam Azad, Wardha, August 1935

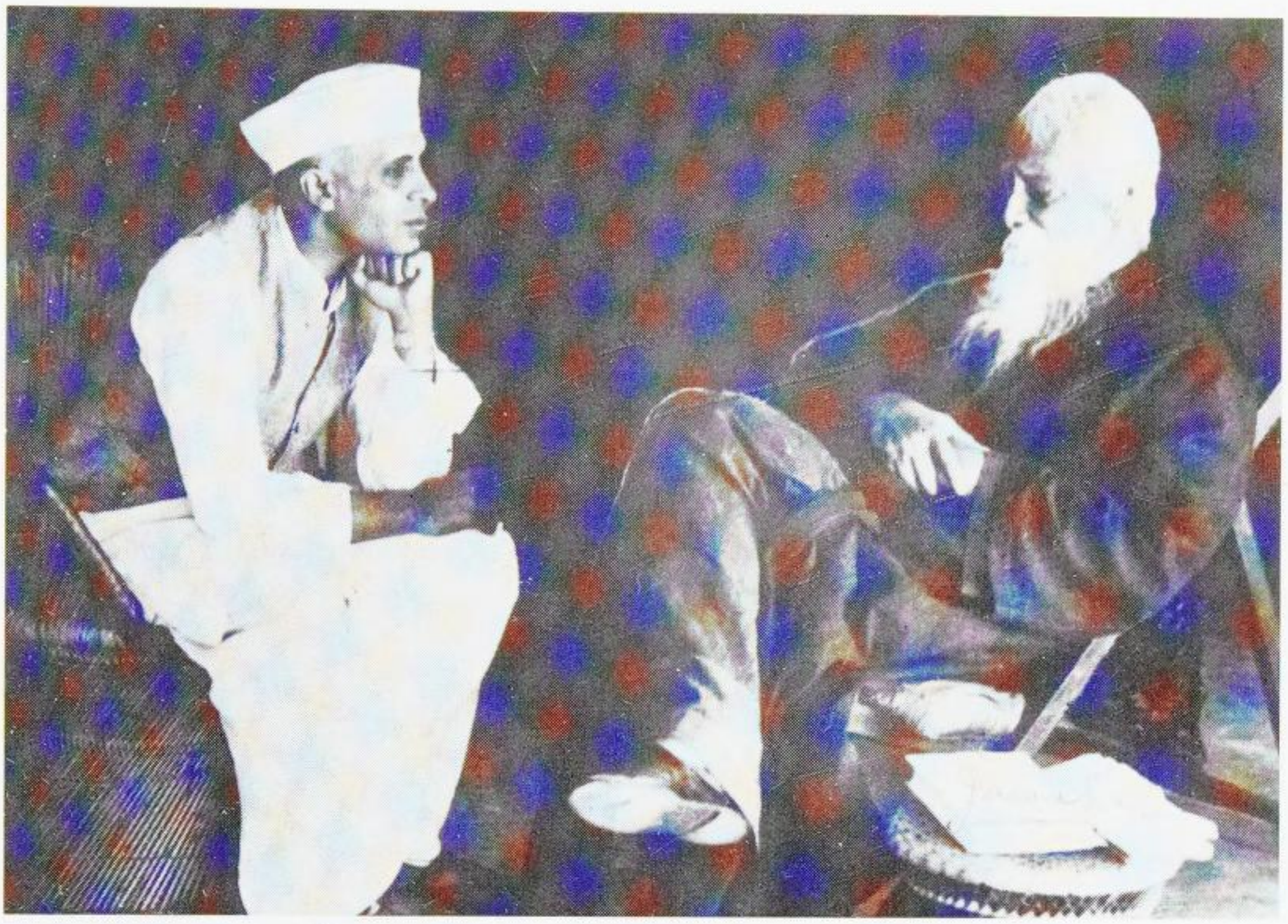

Plate 5: With Rabindranath Tagore, 1936

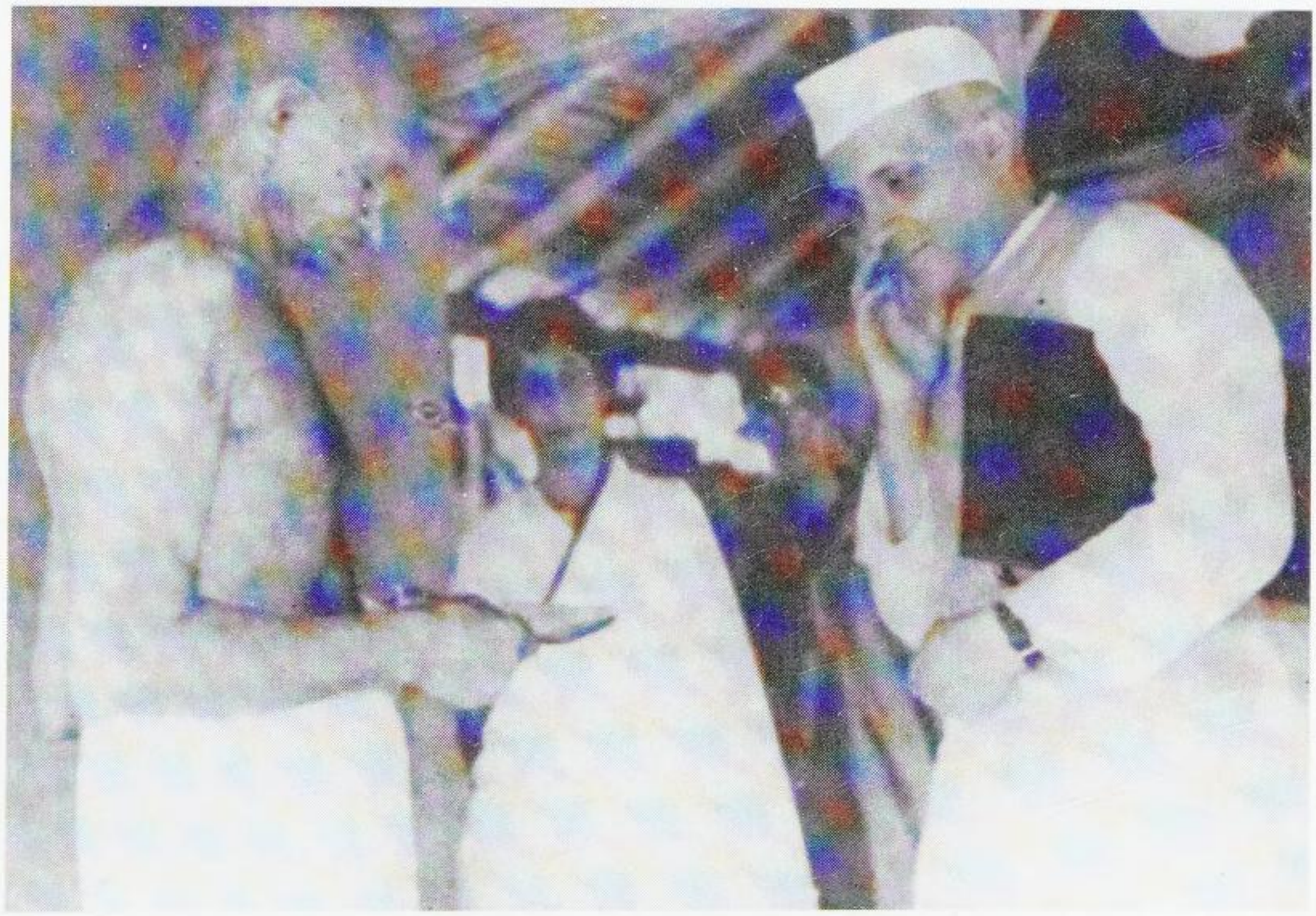

Plate 6: With Gandhiji and Amrit Kaur at Sevagram, February 1938

Plate 7

the far seas where it may be carried by Indian ships, wherever it may go it will bring a message, I hope, of freedom to those people, a message of comradeship, a message that India wants to be friends with every country of the world and India wants to help any people who seek freedom.

47

A Tryst with Destiny[1]

Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake of life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity.

At the dawn of history India started on her unending quest, and trackless centuries are filled with her striving and the grandeur of her success and her failures. Through good and ill fortune alike she has never lost sight of that quest or forgotten the ideals which gave her strength. We end today a period of ill fortune and India discovers herself again. The achievement we celebrate today is but a step, an opening of opportunity, to the greater triumphs and achievements that await us. Are we brave enough and wise enough to grasp this opportunity and accept the challenge of the future?

Freedom and power bring responsibility. The responsibility rests upon this assembly, a sovereign body representing the sovereign people of India. Before the birth of freedom we have endured all the pains of labour and our hearts are heavy with the memory of this sorrow. Some of those pains continue even now. Nevertheless, the past is over and it is the future that beckons to us now.

That future is not one of ease or resting but of incessant striving so that we may fulfil the pledges we have so often taken and the one we shall take today. The service of India means the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity. The ambition of the greatest man of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye. That may be beyond us, but as long as there are tears and suffering, so long our work will not be over.

And so we have to labour and to work, and work hard, to give reality to our dreams. Those dreams are for India, but they are also for the world, for all the

[1] Speech in the Constituent Assembly, 14 August 1947.

nations and peoples are too closely knit together today for any one of them to imagine that it can live apart. Peace has been said to be indivisible; so is freedom, so is prosperity now, and so also is disaster in this one world that can no longer be split into isolated fragments.

To the people of India, whose representatives we are, we make an appeal to join us with faith and confidence in this great adventure. This is no time for petty and destructive criticism, no time for ill will or blaming others. We have to build the noble mansion of free India where all her children may dwell.

48

The Appointed Day[1]

The Appointed Day has come—the day appointed by destiny, and India stands forth again after long slumber and struggle—awake, vital, free and independent. The past clings on to us still in some measure and we have to do much before we redeem the pledges we have so often taken. Yet the turning-point is past, history begins anew for us, the history which we shall live and act, and others will write about.

It is a fateful moment for us in India, for all Asia and for the world. A new star rises, the star of freedom inn the East, a new hope comes into being, a vision long cherished materializes. May the star never set and that hope never be betrayed.

We rejoice in that freedom, even though clouds surround us, and many of our people are sorrow-stricken and difficult problems encompass us. But freedom brings responsibilities and burdens and we have to face them in the spirit of a free and disciplined people.

On this day our first thoughts go to the architect of this freedom, the Father of our Nation who, embodying the old spirit of India, held aloft the torch of freedom and lighted up the darkness that surrounded us. We have often been unworthy followers of his and have strayed from his message, but not only we, but succeeding generations, will remember this message and bear the imprint in their hearts of this great son of India, magnificent in his faith and strength and courage and humility. We shall never allow that torch of freedom to be blown out, however high the wind or stormy the tempest.

Our next thoughts must be of the unknown volunteers and soldiers of freedom who, without praise or reward, have served India even unto death.

We think also of our brothers and sisters who have been cut off from us by political boundaries and who unhappily cannot share at present in the freedom that has come. They are of us and will remain of us whatever may happen, and we shall be sharers in their good and ill fortune alike.

The future beckons to us. Whither do we go and what shall be our endeavour? To bring freedom and opportunity to the common man, to the peasants

[1] Message to the nation on Independence Day printed in the newspapers on 15 August 1947, SWJN, Vol. 3 (II series), pp. 49–50.

and workers of India. To fight and end poverty and ignorance and disease. To build up a prosperous, democratic and progressive nation, and to create social, economic and political institutions which will ensure justice and fullness of life to every man and women.

We have hard work ahead. There is no resting for any one of us till we redeem our pledge in full, till we make all the people of India what destiny intended them to be. We are citizens of a great country, on the verge of bold advance, and we have to live up to that high standard. All of us, to whatever religion we may belong, are equally the children of India with equal rights, privileges and obligations. We cannot encourage communalism or narrow-mindedness, for no nation can be great whose people are narrow in thought or in action.

To the nations and peoples of the world we send greetings and pledge ourselves to cooperate with them in furthering peace, freedom and democracy.

And to India, our much-loved motherland, the ancient, the eternal and the ever-new, we pay our reverent homage and we bind ourselves afresh to her service. *Jai Hind!*

V

The Party

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1

The Congress Becomes Democratic[1]

Gandhi for the first time entered the Congress organization and immediately brought about a complete change in its constitution. He made it democratic and a mass organization. Democratic it had been previously also but it had so far been limited in franchise and restricted to the upper classes. Now the peasants rolled in and, in its new garb, it began to assume the look of a vast agrarian organization with a strong sprinkling of the middle classes. This agrarian character was to grow. Industrial workers also came in but as individuals and not in their separate organized capacity.

Action was to be the basis and objective of this organization, action based on peaceful methods. Thus far the alternatives had been just talking and passing resolutions, or terroristic activity. Both of these were set aside and terrorism was especially condemned as opposed to the basic policy of the Congress. A new technique of action was evolved which, though perfectly peaceful, yet implied non-submission to what was considered wrong and, as a consequence, a willing acceptance of the pain and suffering involved in this. Gandhi was an odd kind of pacifist, for he was an activist full of dynamic energy. There was no submission in him to fate or anything that he considered evil; he was full of resistance, though this was peaceful and courteous.

The call of action was two-fold. There was, of course, the action involved in challenging and resisting foreign rule; there was also the action which led us to fight our own social evils. Apart from the fundamental objective of the Congress—the freedom of India—and the method of peaceful action, the principal planks of the Congress were national unity, which involved the solution of the minority problems, and the raising of the depressed classes and the ending of the curse of untouchability.

Realizing that the main props of British rule were fear, prestige, the cooperation, willing or unwilling, of the people, and certain classes whose vested interests were centred in British rule, Gandhi attacked these foundations. Titles were to be given up and though the title-holders responded to this only in small measure, the popular respect for these British-given titles disappeared and they became symbols of degradation. New standards and values were set up and the

[1] From *The Discovery of India*, pp. 360–4.

pomp and splendour of the viceregal court and the princes, which used to impress so much, suddenly appeared supremely ridiculous and vulgar and rather shameful, surrounded as they were by the poverty and misery of the people. Rich men were not so anxious to flaunt their riches; outwardly at least many of them adopted simpler ways, and in their dress, became almost indistinguishable from humbler folk.

The older leaders of the Congress, bred in a different and more quiescent tradition, did not take easily to these new ways and were disturbed by the upsurge of the masses. Yet so powerful was the wave of feeling and sentiment that swept through the country, that some of this intoxication filled them also. A very few fell away and among them was Mr. M.A. Jinnah. He left the Congress not because of any difference of opinion on the Hindu-Moslem question but because he could not adapt himself to the new and more advanced ideology, and even more so because he disliked the crowds of ill-dressed people, talking in Hindustani, who filled the Congress. His idea of politics was of a superior variety, more suited to the legislative chamber or to a committee-room. For some years he felt completely out of the picture and even decided to leave India for good. He settled down in England and spent several years there.

It is said, and I think with truth, that the Indian habit of mind is essentially one of quietism. Perhaps old races develop that attitude to life; a long tradition of philosophy also leads to it and yet Gandhi, a typical product of India, represents the very antithesis of quietism. He has been a demon of energy and action, a hustler, and a man who not only drives himself but drives others. He has done more than anyone I know to fight and change the quietism of the Indian people.

He sent us to the villages, and the countryside hummed with the activity of innumerable messengers of the new gospel of action. The peasant was shaken up, and he began to emerge from his quiescent shell. The effect on us was different but equally far-reaching, for we saw, for the first time as it were, the villager in the intimacy of his mud-hut, and with the stark shadow of hunger always pursuing him. We learnt our Indian economics more from these visits than from books and learned discourses. The emotional experience we had already undergone was emphasized and confirmed and henceforward there could be no going back for us to our old life or our old standards, howsoever much our views might change subsequently.

Gandhi held strong views on economic, social, and other matters. He did not try to impose all of these on the Congress, though he continued to develop his ideas, and sometimes in the process varied them, through his writings. But some he tried to push into the Congress. He proceeded cautiously for he wanted to carry the people with him. Sometimes he went too far for the Congress and had to retrace his steps. Not many accepted his views in their entirety; some disagreed with that fundamental outlook. But many accepted them in the modified form in which they came to the Congress as being suited to the

circumstances then existing. In two respects the background of his thought had a vague but considerable influence; the fundamental test of everything was how far it benefited the masses, and the means were always important and could not be ignored even though the end in view was right, for the means governed the end and varied it.

Gandhi was essentially a man of religion, a Hindu to the innermost depths of his being, and yet his conception of religion had nothing to do with any dogma or custom or ritual.* It was basically concerned with his firm belief in the moral law, which he calls the law of truth or love. Truth and nonviolence appear to him to be the same thing or different aspects of one and the same thing, and he uses these words almost interchangeably. Claiming to understand the spirit of Hinduism, he rejects every text or practice which does not fit in with his idealist interpretation of what it should be, calling it an interpolation or a subsequent accretion. "I decline to be slave," he has said, "to precedents or practice I cannot understand or defend on a moral basis." And so in practice he is singularly free to take the path of his choice, to change and adapt himself, to develop his philosophy of life and action, subject only to the overriding consideration of the moral law as he conceives this to be. Whether that philosophy is right or wrong, may be argued, but he insists on applying the same fundamental yardstick to everything, and himself especially. In politics, as in other aspects of life, this creates difficulties for the average person, and often misunderstanding. But no difficulty makes him swerve from the straight line of his choosing though within limits he is continually adapting himself to a changing situation. Every reform that he suggests, every advice that he gives to others, he straightway applies to himself. He is always beginning with himself and his words and actions fit into each other like a glove on the hand. And so, whatever happens, he never loses his integrity and there is always an organic completeness about his life and work. Even in his apparent failures he has seemed to grow in stature.

What was the idea of India which he was setting out to mould according to his own wishes and ideals? "I shall work for an India in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country, in whose making they have an effective voice, an India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people, an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony. . . . There can be no room in such an India for the curse of untouchability or the curse of

*Gandhi told the Federation of International Fellowship in January, 1928, that "After long study and experience I have come to these conclusions that: (1) all religions are true, (2) all religions have some error in them, (3) all religions are almost as dear to me as my own Hinduism. My veneration for other faiths is the same as for my own faith. Consequently, the thought of conversion is impossible. . . . Our prayer for others ought never to be: 'God give them the light thou has given to me!' But: 'Give them all the light and truth they need for their highest development!' "

intoxicating drinks and drugs. . . . Women will enjoy the same right as men. . . . This is the India of my dreams." Proud of his Hindu inheritance as he was, he tried to give to Hinduism a kind of universal attire and included all religions within the fold of truth. He refused to narrow his cultural inheritance.

"Indian culture," he wrote, "is neither Hindu, Islamic, nor any other, wholly. It is a fusion of all." Again he said: "I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. I refuse to live in other peoples' houses as an interloper, a beggar, or a slave." Influenced by modern thought currents, he never let go of his roots and clung to them tenaciously.

And so he set about to restore the spiritual unity of the people and to break the barrier between the small westernized group at the top and the masses, to discover the living elements in the old roots and to build upon them, to waken these masses out of their stupor and static condition and make them dynamic. In his single-track and yet many-sided nature the dominating impression that one gathered was his identification with the masses, a community of spirit with them, an amazing sense of unity with the dispossessed and poverty-stricken not only of India but of the world. Even religion, as everything else, took second place to his passion to raise these submerged people. "A semi-starved nation can have neither religion, nor art nor organization." "Whatever can be useful to the starving millions is beautiful to my mind. Let us give to-day first the vital things of life, and all the graces and ornaments of life will follow. . . . I want art and literature that can speak to millions." These unhappy dispossessed millions haunted him and everything seemed to revolve round them. "For millions it is an eternal vigil or an eternal trance." His ambition, he said, was "to wipe every tear from every eye."

It is not surprising that this astonishingly vital man, full of self-confidence and an unusual kind of power, standing for equality and freedom for each individual, but measuring all this in terms of the poorest, fascinated the masses of India and attracted them like a magnet. He seemed to them to link up the past with the future and to make the dismal present appear just as a stepping-stone to that future of life and hope. And not the masses only but intellectuals and others also, though their minds were often troubled and confused and the change-over for them from the habits of a lifetime was more difficult. Thus he effected a vast psychological revolution not only among those who followed his lead but also among his opponents and those many neutrals who could not make up their minds what to think and what to do.

Congress was dominated by Gandhi and yet it was a peculiar domination, for the Congress was an active, rebellious, many-sided organization, full of variety of opinion, and not easily led this way or that. Often Gandhi toned down his position to meet the wishes of others, sometimes he accepted even an adverse decision. On some vital matters for him, he was adamant, and on more

than one occasion there came a break between him and the Congress. But always he was the symbol of India's independence and militant nationalism, the unyielding opponent of all those who sought to enslave her, and it was as such a symbol that people gathered to him and accepted his lead, even though they disagreed with him on other matters. They did not always accept that lead when there was no active struggle going on, but when the struggle was inevitable that symbol became all-important and everything else was secondary.

2

An Agrarian Programme for the Congress[1]

Any movement which seeks to become a mass movement must necessarily have an economic programme for the masses. On general principles, therefore, it is essential that the Congress should lay down the broad outlines of such a programme. Such a programme would have to deal with questions of capital and labour and the land laws, more the latter, as India is still overwhelmingly an agricultural country. Two difficulties have stood in the way of the Congress and prevented it from tackling these questions. One is the lack of uniformity of the land laws in the various parts of the country, and the other is the fear of many Congressmen lest they irritate and antagonize powerful classes like the big capitalists and the landlords. The result has been that although many attempts have been made to get the Congress to tackle these questions, it has fought shy of them. In spite of this ostrich-like desire not to face facts, however, Congress was being forced gradually but surely to recognize them and to give its opinion in regard to them. An appreciation of the fact that the only solid basis of a revolutionary movement is an economic programme of radical betterment of the masses led the Congress to make several rather vague but none the less significant gestures which were meant to win over the masses. To some extent they succeeded in winning the sympathy of the people, but they did not translate themselves sufficiently into the day-to-day economic life of the people to fire them to irresistible movement. . . .

The fear that any detailed economic programme is likely to irritate some groups is perfectly justified. It is impossible to give an abundance of the good things of life to everyone, at this stage of our civilization at any rate. All that one can do is to distribute the good things more equitably. If more of them are given to the poor peasant or tenant, obviously some one has less of them. It is no use avoiding this conclusion. There should be no doubt that the basis of any agrarian programme must be the good of the man in the field—the cultivator as well as the landless man who would cultivate if he had the chance.

[1] Notes made in Naini Prison, 1930, J.N. Miscellaneous Papers, NMML. Excerpts.

The Congress does not desire to precipitate a class conflict. It is wise in avoiding it, but it must always be remembered that the conflict has been there and is there. It is the inevitable outcome of existing conditions. Therefore it cannot be wholly ignored, and circumstances might at any time force the issue before the Congress for immediate decision. Those who shape Congress policy must be prepared for such a contingency and must be clear about certain matters. They must have the ultimate ideal clear-cut in their minds. This need not be advertised at this stage. At the same time it need not be kept secret either. The immediate programme will necessarily depend on many circumstances, but it must always be such that it takes us towards the ideal and benefits the really vital classes in the community. We must not do anything to irritate needlessly any group—zamindar or capitalist. It is no good adding to our enemies in the middle of a great fight. But where a choice between two positions has to be made the Congress must, without fear, back the vital groups—the masses, the kisans and petty zamindars and landless people—even though the consequences might be the driving away of the taluqdars and the big zamindars. Any weakening in such matters would end the solid and the only real support of the masses for the taluqdar's shadow which we can never grasp. This point has to be stressed as most of us are apt to think too much of the big zamindar. He is always shouting about his vested interests while the poor tenant or petty zamindar is seldom audible. So that, even without our having much sympathy for the big zamindar, we are impressed by him and his shouting and automatically give him more than he deserves.

The words "zamindar" and "tenant" are somewhat misleading as by far the vast majority of zamindars are petty ones, little better than the tenants. . . .

Most of the landlords are poor. But after all the whole lot of them taken together are a handful only—under seven lakhs in a population of probably over four crores in Agra province. In Oudh there must be roughly the same proportion. What of those millions who are not zamindars? They are tenants or landless labourers or the unemployed. It is they who crowd our meetings and become our volunteers and carry on the no-rent campaign. It is they who suffer most and deserve the most consideration. They are the backbone of the province and our programme is successful only in so far as it brings relief to them.

Out ultimate ideal should be large nationalized farms, and peasant proprietors cultivating their own farms but without the right of alienation. The latter restriction is desirable as otherwise big estates would grow up again. But at present this restriction will not be understood or appreciated. Therefore we must leave it out and just aim at peasant proprietorship at present. Some form or other of this exists in two-thirds of India today.

The big estates can be broken up by the well recognized and usual methods employed in western countries, like England and Ireland. There is nothing socialistic or communistic about these methods. We can make it clear that there

will be no confiscation of property except for definite activities against the state or the national movements. Land will be acquired on payment of compensation. Almost every big zamindar will welcome this assurance today. He is afraid of the future and knows that it is not possible for present conditions to continue for long. We shall of course take steps to tax heavily big estates by means of a graded land tax and inheritance tax.

3

Defining Congress Attitude[1]

Our campaign for independence has now lasted continuously and intensively for nine months. It has gone on from victory to victory and strength to strength and each new effort to crush it has resulted in a fresh move forward. All this is solid gain for the country and our added strength and self-confidence are certain indications that we are nearing our goal. Yet we must remember that the real thing is the attainment of the goal and every step that we take must be taken from the viewpoint of the very early attainment of this goal. This appears to be a truism but, in effect, it is not so. There is very grave danger of our putting this idea of the goal at the back of our minds and not relating it to the immediate work before us. With this outlook we may gradually relapse into a dreary round of activity, good in itself, but feeble and ineffective and wholly uninspiring from the larger viewpoint. There are some people who perhaps imagine that the goal is really a distant one and that immediately we must aim at something else. This cannot be the Congress viewpoint and can be ignored. Others, not consciously thinking in this way, are yet apt to lose themselves in petty activities which by themselves are wholly insufficient to advance our cause.

What then are we aiming at? We have definitely put before us the attainment of a revolutionary, that is root and branch, change in our national political structure. (The word 'revolutionary' is used throughout as meaning a great and radical change. It has no reference to violent activities.) If our ideal is a revolutionary one then our methods must also necessarily be revolutionary (also in a nonviolent sense). And indeed, the whole conception of noncooperation and civil disobedience is revolutionary. Ideas and activities, however, have a remarkable way of losing their vitality and of falling into ruts. This appears to be happening in the country now and clear thinking is therefore very necessary.

No revolutionary movement can be static. The very terms are contradictory. Revolutionary activities must necessarily be dynamic. As soon as the dynamic character disappears the revolutionary element also goes. Then again, it must be borne in mind that no revolution can stand still. It marches forward from step to step or it goes backward and collapses. Thirdly, a revolution is largely based on the psychology of the people and therefore the psychological aspect

[1] Note written in Naini Central Jail sometime in December 1930. JN Miscellaneous Paper, NMML. Excerpts.

must ever be kept in mind, specially so in our type of movement which is intimately connected with mental reactions. Fourthly, and as a consequence of the last, our activity should be such as to appeal to or inspire the largest numbers of classes of our countrymen. It is possible for a while to induce people to act in the heroic way but large numbers do not continue acting in this way unless they feel that there is a good chance of their bettering their economic condition if the goal is attained. Obviously the largest numbers ultimately mean the peasantry and the workers—in the U.P., the peasantry and petty farmers. Fifthly, strength can only come in a revolutionary movement from below up, not from above down. Therefore it becomes essential that a continuous attempt be made to keep the people at the bottom of the organization in proper form. They must have a large measure of initiative and direction and they must feel that they are the vital parts of the organization. Thus, in villages, the panchayat must be made as far as possible to function and act; in towns, councils and committees—specially *mohalla* committees—should act. Too much dictation from above kills initiative and ultimately the movement. Even when there is dictation it should almost be invisible and should take the form of a decision of a committee. The people should get used to obeying an impersonal committee chosen by themselves, not individuals.

Sixthly, the initiative should always be in our hands. We must not permit it to go to the enemy. This means that we must always be on the aggressive. No resolution can fight successfully a defensive warfare. The psychology of mass revolt disappear with a defensive attitude.

Seventhly, we must keep the idea of mass revolt always before us. Ultimately, that is the only thing that will tell. In spite of the great success of our movement we have not yet come within measurable distance of moving the masses in a revolutionary sense. There is sympathy, but no more. Gradually, if we do not look out, even this sympathy will get less and less.

These are some of the considerations that must be borne in mind in carrying on the campaign. Sometimes it is said that it is no good going to jail as we can do better work outside; that we should concentrate on constructive work, etc. This is a foolish and dangerous line of reasoning. Nobody wants to rush to jail for no rhyme or reason but to deviate by a hair's breadth from one's line of activity in order to avoid jail is playing entirely into the hands of the Government. It also means that we are on the defensive and the psychological reaction on the people in bound to be great. And, in addition, people seem to forget that however much one may avoid jail one cannot keep out of it for long unless one does no solid work at all and more or less retires from effective public life. Anyone that is considered dangerous by the Government is picked off by them, whether he wants to or not. Government is bent on keeping our effective workers in prison. Vallabhbhai Patel goes out. He is pursued by Section 144 and although, partly for reasons of health, he does not break any such order,

even then he is arrested for a petty speech on a minor occasion. If one has got to be arrested one might as well do it in style and reap the benefit of a brave and defiant attitude. Otherwise we are apt to look very much like hunted animals trying to save our skins—a most demoralizing and depressing outlook. The whole nature of our campaign demands aggression, defiance, daring and challenging. It is better to err on this side than on the side of caution. It is absurd for anyone to feel that he is indispensable to the movement and must keep himself safely out of harm's way. If Gandhi is not indispensable, much less are others. The best of workers becomes useless and even harmful the moment people begin to think that he is avoiding jail.

The talk of concentrating on constructive work means in plain language not doing any dangerous work. Constructive work is a side issue today. The main thing is destructive and every Congressman must hurl himself into this. The more the defiance, etc., the more will khadi, etc., flourish. If the defiance and law-breaking and arrests and lathi charges, etc., disappear then automatically the boycott and khadi will weaken. Constructive work has become the cloak for no work today. We are out now to conquer power by revolutionary means. Let this never be forgotten and this can only be done by an intensification of law-breaking and, above all, by the no-tax campaign.

Thus from every point of view it is clear that the whole basis of the movement must continue to be defiance and law-breaking. . . .

It has been stated above that everything depends on the attitude. If it is defiant enough the rest will follow. The boycott will succeed even without any picketing. With defiance absent the boycott will automatically vanish, for everyone will feel that the movement was weakening. So far as the cloth boycott is concerned it should be remembered that the greatest and the most ruthless strictness is essential. There can be no compromise, no weakness on any single point. It is better that we remain strict even though we are powerless to enforce our will. At least we give then the right lead to the people. A compromising spirit means a wrong lead to the people.

Those people who come back from jail must remember that a great deal depends on their readiness to return. For if it appears to the Government and the people that such persons are not prepared to return to jail, then the Government wins. Only when it sees that there is terrible determination will it realize that it must own defeat. The Government itself has been laying stress on the fact that in many places people who have returned from jail keep at a safe distance from it! This kind of thing has a bad psychological effect.

Lately the Government has declared that the movement is moribund in the towns of the U.P. This may be an exaggeration but anyhow it is not a compliment to those who direct the movement in the U.P. and the fact certainly appears to be that that the leaders of the movement in the U.P. are showing terrible caution. There is no verve—no dash—no jumping into the fire—no

gambling for big stakes—no reliance on the masses and specially the peasantry. There is a very middle-class cautious approach to problems and no striking decisions. The U.P.P.C.C.[2] is in a rut. Till it gets out of it, little will be done.

In the course of every revolution a time comes when the revolutionary ardour of the principal workers lessens and when, instead of being in the vanguard, they drop behind and try to keep back others from advancing. This is the tragedy of revolutions. Let the U.P. not experience it.

The above is written from a purely political standpoint. From the socialistic standpoint, much greater stress would necessarily be laid on the peasants and workers and on an agrarian movement. Unless we have such an agrarian movement there is grave danger of our relapsing into a sect of civil resisters and the country going on merrily in spite of us!

[2] Uttar Pradesh Pradesh Congress Committee.

4

Message to the Nation[1]

The world is in torment today and everywhere in the West as in the East there is conflict and the fate of devastating world war overshadows us. It is not a conflict of individuals but one of ideas and of vast elemental forces, which are moving millions and which clash against each other. Everything is out of joint and we seek feverishly for a new equilibrium which will fit in with existing conditions and yield peace and progress to a distracted and unhappy world. Behind the seeming complexity of international problems the underlying fact comes out. On one side are ranged the forces of progress, on the other the forces of reaction and vested interest. We in India are engrossed in our own difficulties and problems. And inevitably our own activities must lie in this sphere. But the right way to understand our own problems is to see it in proper perspective as a part of the world problem, for the world today, in spite of its diversities and mutual conflicts, is a unity and must be considered as a whole. No part of it can live in isolation, cut off from the rest. With this background in view, when we consider the problem of India, we find that essentially it is the problem of removing poverty and unemployment, and the building up of the political and social order which remove all obstacles and hindrances from the path of freedom and progress. This removal involves political freedom. For without the power to shape our destiny, we are helpless victims of external forces which keep us down and exploit us. Political freedom thus becomes the primary objective without which we cannot advance materially in any direction. But behind that lies the real urge, the urgent necessity and desire to solve our problems of poverty and unemployment, to raise the standards of our millions, to remove illiteracy, to build up our industries, to get out of the iron grip of vested interests and to rid India of the numerous ills which inevitably follow foreign domination. That is a big problem, but big as it is, it is a part of the bigger world problem.

It is to the solution of this problem that the National Congress has exerted itself. And it is for this, that it has demanded the allegiance and support of the people of India. It has attached little importance to minor measures of reforms

[1] Bombay, 18 May 1936. D.I.G. (C.I.D.) Maharashtra State File No. A/Misc./38/134, pp. 11–12. The record of this speech by the National Gramophone Manufacturing Co. Ltd. was released on 27 December 1936 at the time of the Faizpur Congress.

for all these are but wasted efforts when the road to real progress is barred. It has refused to be swept away by communal passions or the cries of particular groups seeking advantage at the cost of the larger good. It believes that the communal question has nothing to do with the great problem of poverty and unemployment which affects our millions. And because it has no real connection with them it is a shadow problem which will vanish at the touch of reality. The Congress stands thus for Indian freedom, it stands for the interests of the masses. It stands for great and radical changes in our economic and social system. It stands in the outside world with the forces of progress which are battling against the forces of reaction. It is the joint front in India against imperialism and its allies and satellites. All our people, to whatever group or religion or caste they might belong, have found welcome and comradeship in its widespread ranks. All Indians, whoever they might be, if they believe in these ideals and objectives and desire the freedom and progress of our well beloved country and her unhappy millions, must throw their weight on the side of the Congress and join in the gallant struggle for freedom. The present is full of misfortune and misery, and many are depressed and puzzled. But the present also offers many an opportunity for high endeavour and brave adventure for a cause that must fire the imagination of all, young and old, who have the spark of life in them and who are not afraid of risk and danger in quest of great ideals. But the present will pass—it is the future that counts. And this future beckons to us, a future bright with promise and achievement and human well-being. Who will not answer that call?

5

Election Manifesto[1]

For more than fifty years the Indian National Congress has laboured for the freedom of India, and even as its strength grew and it came to represent more and more the nationalist urge of the Indian people and their desire to put an end to exploitation by British imperialism, it came into conflict with the ruling power. During recent years the Congress has led great movements for national freedom and has sought to develop sanctions whereby such freedom can be achieved by peaceful mass action and the disciplined sacrifice and suffering of the Indian people. To the lead of the Congress the Indian people have responded in an abundant measure and thus confirmed their inherent right to freedom. That struggle for freedom still continues and must continue till India is free and independent.

These years have seen the development of an economic crisis in India and the world which has led to a progressive deterioration in the condition of all classes of our people. The poverty-stricken masses are today in the grip of an even more abject poverty and destitution, and this growing disease urgently and insistently demands a radical remedy. Poverty and unemployment have long been the lot of our peasantry and industrial workers; today they cover and crush other classes also—artisan, the trader, the small merchant, the middle class intelligentsia. For the vast millions of our countrymen the problem of achieving national independence has become an urgent one, for only independence can give us the power to solve our economic and social problems and end the exploitation of our masses.

The growth of the national movement and the economic crisis have resulted in the intense repression of the Indian people and the suppression of civil liberties, and the British Government has sought to strengthen the imperialist bonds that envelop India and to perpetuate the domination and exploitation of the Indian people by enacting the Government of India Act of 1935.

In the international sphere crisis follows crisis in an ever-deepening degree and world war hangs over the horizon. The Lucknow Congress called the attention of the nation to this grave situation in India and the world, and declared

[1] Drafted by Jawaharlal Nehru, 22 August 1936. AICC File No. 42/1936, pp. 629–41. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, pp. 401–40.

its opposition to the participation of India in an imperialist war and its firm resolve to continue the struggle for the independence of India.

The Congress rejected in its entirely the constitution imposed upon India by the new Act and declared that no constitution imposed by outside authority and no constitution which curtails the sovereignty of the people of India, and does not recognize their right to shape and control fully their political and economic future, can be accepted. Such a constitution, in its opinion, must be based on the independence of India as a nation and it can only be framed by a constituent assembly.

The Congress has always laid stress on the development of the strength of the people and the forging of sanctions to enforce the people's will. To this end it has carried on activities outside the legislatures. The Congress holds that real strength comes from thus organizing and serving the masses.

Adhering to this policy and objective, but in view of the present situation and in order to prevent the operation of forces calculated to strengthen alien domination and exploitation, the Congress decides to contest seats in the coming elections for the provincial legislatures. But the purpose of sending Congressmen to the legislatures under the new Act is not to cooperate in any way with the Act but to combat it and seek to end it. It is to carry out, in so far as is possible, the Congress policy of rejection of the Act, and to resist British imperialism in its attempts to strengthen its hold on India and its exploitation of the Indian people. In the opinion of the Congress, activity in the legislatures should be such as to help in the work outside, in the strengthening of the people, and in the development of the sanctions which are essential to freedom.

The new legislatures, hedged and circumscribed by safeguards and special powers for the protection of British and other vested interests, cannot yield substantial benefits, and they are totally incapable of solving the vital problems of poverty and unemployment. But they may well be used by British imperialism for its own purposes to the disadvantage and injury of the Indian people. The Congress representatives will seek to resist this, and to take all possible steps to end the various regulations, ordinances and acts which oppress the Indian people and smother their will to freedom. They will work for the establishment of civil liberty, for the release of political prisoners and detenus, and to repair the wrongs done to the peasantry and to public institutions in the course of the national struggle.

The Congress realizes that independence cannot be achieved through these legislatures, nor can the problem of poverty and unemployment be effectively tackled by them. Nevertheless the Congress places its general programme before the people of India so that they may know what it stands for and what it will try to achieve, whenever it has the power to do so.

At the Karachi session of the Congress in 1931 the general Congress objective was defined in the fundamental rights resolution. That general definition

still holds. The last five years of developing crisis have, however, necessitated a further consideration of the problems of poverty and unemployment and other economic problems. With a view to this the Lucknow Congress laid particular stress on the fact that "the most important and urgent problem of the country is the appalling poverty, unemployment and indebtedness of the peasantry, fundamentally due to antiquated and repressive land tenure and revenue systems, and intensified in recent years by the great slump in prices of agricultural produce", and called upon the provincial Congress committees to frame full agrarian programmes. The agrarian programme which will be drawn up by the A.I.C.C. on the basis of these provincial programmes will be issued later.

Pending the formulation of a fuller programme, the Congress reiterates its declaration made at Karachi—that it stands for a reform of the system of land tenure and revenue and rent and an equitable adjustment of the burden on agricultural land, giving immediate relief to the smaller peasantry by a substantial reduction of agricultural rent and revenue now paid by them and exempting uneconomic holdings from payment of rent and revenue.

The question of indebtedness requires urgent consideration and the formulation of a scheme including the declaration of a moratorium, an enquiry into and scaling down of debts and the provision for cheap credit facilities by the state. This relief should extend to the agricultural tenants, peasant proprietors, small landholders and petty traders.

In regard to industrial workers the policy of the Congress is to secure for them a decent standard of living, hours of work and conditions of labour in conformity, as far as the economic conditions in the country permit, with international standards, suitable machinery for the settlement of disputes between employees and workmen, protection against the economic consequences of old age, sickness and unemployment and the right of workers to form unions and to strike for the protection of their interests.

The Congress has already declared that it stands for the removal of all sex disabilities, whether legal or social, in any sphere of public activity. It has expressed itself in favour of maternity benefits and the protection of women workers. The women of India have already taken a leading part in the freedom struggle, and the Congress looks forward to their sharing, in an equal measure with the men of India, the privileges and obligations of citizens of a free India.

The stress that the Congress has laid on the removal of untouchability and for the social and economic uplift of the Harijans and the backward classes is well known. It holds that they should be equal citizens with others, with equal rights in all civic matters.

The encouragement of khadi and village industries has also long been a principal plank of the Congress programme. In regard to the larger industries, protection should be given but the rights of the workers and the producers of

raw materials should be safeguarded, and due regard should be paid to the interests of village industries.

The treatment of political prisoners has long been a scandal in India. Every effort should be made to improve this and make it humane. It is equally necessary to change the whole basis of the prison administration so that every prisoner might be treated in a humanitarian and rational manner.

The communal decision, which forms part of the new Act, has led to much controversy and the Congress attitude towards it has been misunderstood by some people. The rejection in its entirety of the new Act by the Congress inevitably involves the rejection of the communal decision. Even apart from the Act as a whole, the communal decision is wholly unacceptable as being inconsistent with independence and the principle of democracy; it encourages fissiparous and disruptive tendencies, hinders the normal growth and consideration of economic and social questions, is a barrier to national progress, and strikes at the root of Indian unity. No community or group in India profits by it in any real sense, for the large injury caused by it to all outweighs the petty benefits that some have received. Ultimately it probably injures most those groups whom it is meant to favour. The only party that profits by it is the third party which rules and exploits us.

The attitude of the Congress is, therefore, not one of indifference or neutrality. It disapproves strongly of the communal decision and would like to end it. But the Congress has repeatedly laid stress on the fact that a satisfactory solution of the communal question can come only through the goodwill and cooperation of the principal communities concerned. An attempt by one group to get some communal favour from the British Government at the expense of another group results in an increase of communal tension and exploitation of both groups by the Government. Such a policy is hardly in keeping with the dignity of Indian nationalism; it does not fit in with the struggle for independence. It does not pay either party in the long run; it side-tracks the main issue.

The Congress, therefore, holds that the right way to deal with the situation created by the communal decision is to intensify our struggle for independence and, at the same time, to seek a common basis for an agreed solution which helps to strengthen the unity of India. The efforts of one community only to change the decision in the face of the opposition of another community might well result in confirming and consolidating that decision, for conflict between the two produces the very situation which gives Government a chance of enforcing such a decision. The Congress thus is of the opinion that such one-sided agitation can bear no useful result.

It is necessary to bear in mind that the whole communal problem, in spite of its importance, has nothing to do with the major problems of India—poverty and widespread unemployment. It is not a religious problem and it affects only a handful of people at the top. The peasantry, the workers, the

traders and merchants and the lower middle class of all communities are in no way touched by it and their burdens remain.

The question of accepting ministers or not in the new legislatures was postponed for a decision by the Lucknow Congress. The A.I.C.C. is of the opinion that it will be desirable for this decision to be taken after the elections. Whatever the decision on this question might be, it must be remembered that, in any event, the Congress stands for the rejection of the new Act, and for no cooperation in its working. The object remains the same—the ending of the Act. With a view to this end every endeavour will be made to prevent the introduction and functioning of the federal part of the scheme, which is intended to perpetuate the domination of imperialist interests and the feudal interests of the states over the whole country and prevent all progress towards freedom. It must be borne in mind that the new provincial assemblies will form the electorate for the proposed federal central legislature and the composition of those provincial legislatures will materially affect the fate of the federal constitution.

We appeal to the country to give every support to the Congress in the elections that are coming. National welfare demands it. The fight for independence calls for it. The effectiveness of the work that the Congress members of the legislatures will do will depend on their numbers and their discipline and the backing and support that the country gives them. With a clear majority they will be in a position to fight the Act and to help effectively in the struggle for independence. Every party and group that stands aloof from the Congress organization tends, knowingly or unknowingly, to become a source of weakness to the nation and a source of strength to the forces ranged against it. For the fight for independence a joint front is necessary. The Congress offers that joint national front which comprises all classes and communities, bound together by their desire to free India, end the exploitation of her people, and build up a strong and prosperous and united nation, resting on the well-being of the masses.

With this great and inspiring goal before us, for which so many men and women of India have suffered and sacrificed their all under the banner of the Congress, and for which today thousands of our countrymen are suffering silently and with brave endurance, we call upon our people with full hope and confidence to rally to the cause of the Congress, of India, of freedom.

6

The Evolution of the Congress[1]

So I would like to stress before you, as I did before, this organic connexion between world events, this action and interaction between one and the other. Thus we shall understand a little this complicated picture of the world today, a unity in spite of its amazing diversity and conflicts. In Europe, as in the Far East, there is continuous trouble, and everywhere there is ferment. The Arab struggle against British imperialism in Palestine is as much part of this great world conflict as India's struggle for freedom. Democracy and fascism, nationalism and imperialism, socialism and a decaying capitalism, combat each other in the world of ideas, and this conflict develops on the material plane and bayonets and bombs take the place of votes in the struggle for power. Changing conditions in the world demand a new political and economic orientation and if this does not come soon there is friction and conflict. Gradually this leads to a revolution in the minds of men and this seeks to materialize, and every delay in this change-over leads to further conflict. The existing equilibrium having gone, giving place to no other, there is deterioration, reaction, and disaster. It is this disaster that faces us in the world today and war on a terrible scale is an ever-present possibility. Except for the fascist powers every country and people dread this war and yet they all prepare for it feverishly, and in doing so they line up on this side or that. The middle groups fade out or, ghost-like, they flit about unreal, disillusioned, self-tortured, ever-doubting. That has been the fate of the old liberalism everywhere, though in India perhaps those who call themselves liberals, and others who think in their way, have yet to come out of the fog of complacency that envelops them. But we

> Move with new desires.
> For where we used to build and love
> Is no man's land, and only ghosts can live
> Between two fires.

What are these new desires? The wish to put an end to this mad world system which breeds war and conflict and which crushes millions; to abolish poverty and unemployment and release the energies of vast numbers of people

[1] Presidential address at A.I.C.C. session, Faizpur, 27 December 1936. Excerpts. For a fuller version of this speech see ante, pp. 249–55.

and utilize them for the progress and betterment of humanity; to build where today we destroy.

During the past eight months I have wandered a great deal in this vast land of ours and I have seen again the throbbing agony of India's masses, the call of their eyes for relief from the terrible burdens they carry. That is our problem; all others are secondary and merely lead up to it. To solve that problem we shall have to end the imperialistic control and exploitation of India. But what is this imperialism of today? It is not merely the physical possession of one country by another; its roots lie deeper. Modern imperialism is an outgrowth of capitalism and cannot be separated from it.

It is because of this that we cannot understand our problems without understanding the implications of imperialism and socialism. The disease is deep-seated and requires a radical and revolutionary remedy and that remedy is the socialist structure of society. We do not fight for socialism in India today for we have to go far before we can act in terms of socialism, but socialism comes in here and now to help us to understand our problem and point out the path to its solution, and to tell us the real content of the Swaraj to come. With no proper understanding of the problem, our actions are likely to be erratic, purposeless and ineffective.

The Congress stands today for full democracy in India and fights for a democratic state, not for socialism. It is anti-imperialist and strives for great changes in our political and economic structure. I hope that the logic of events will lead it to socialism for that seems to me the only remedy for India's ills. But the urgent and vital problem for us today is political independence and the establishment of a democratic state. And because of this, the Congress must line up with all the progressive forces of the world and must stand for world peace. . . .

We have great tasks ahead, great problems to solve both in India and in the international sphere. Who can face and solve these problems in India but this great organization of ours, which has, through fifty years' efforts and sacrifice, established its unchallengeable right to speak for the millions of India? Has it not become the mirror of their hopes and desires, their urge to freedom, and the strong arm that will wrest this freedom from unwilling and resisting hands? It started in a small way with a gallant band of pioneers but even then it represented a historic force and it drew to itself the goodwill of the Indian people. From year to year it grew, faced inner conflicts whenever it wanted to advance and was held back by some of its members. But the urge to go ahead was too great, the push from below increased, and though a few left us, unable to adjust themselves to changing conditions, vast numbers of others joined the Congress. It became a great propaganda machine dominating the public platform of India. But it was an amorphous mass and its organizational side was week, and effective action on a large scale was beyond its powers. The coming of Gandhiji

brought the peasant masses to the Congress, and the new constitution that was adopted at his instance in Nagpur in 1920 tightened up the organization, limited the number of delegates according to population, and gave it strength and capacity for joint and effective action. That action followed soon after on a country-wide scale and was repeated in later years. But the very success and prestige of the Congress often drew undesirable elements to its fold and accentuated the defects of the constitution. The organization was becoming unwieldy and slow of movement and capable of being exploited in local areas by particular groups. Two years ago radical changes were made in the constitution again at Gandhiji's instance. One of these was the fixation of the number of delegates according to membership, a change which has given a greater reality to our elections and strengthened us organizationally. But still our organizational side lags far behind the great prestige of the Congress, and there is a tendency for our committees to function in the air, cut off from the rank and file.

It was partly to remedy this that the mass contacts resolution was passed by the Lucknow Congress, but unhappily the committee that was in charge of this matter has not reported yet. The problem is a wider one than was comprised in that resolution for it includes an overhauling of the Congress constitution with the object of making it a closer-knit body, capable of disciplined and effective action. That action to be effective must be mass action, and the essence of the strength of the Congress has been this mass basis and mass response to its calls. But though that mass basis is there, it is not reflected in the organizational side, and hence an inherent weakness in our activities.

We have seen the gradual transformation of the Congress from a small upper-class body to one representing the great body of the lower middle classes and later the masses of this country. As this drift to the masses continued the political role of the organization changed and is changing, for this political role is largely determined by the economic roots of the organization.

We are already and inevitably committed to this mass basis for without it there is no power or strength in us. We have now to bring that into line with the organization, so as to give our primary members great powers of initiative and control, and opportunities for day-to-day activities. We have, in other words, to democratize the Congress still further.

7

Office Acceptance[1]

We went to our people and spoke to them of freedom and the ending of their exploitation; we went to that forgotten creature, the Indian peasant, and remembered that his poverty was the basic problem of India; we identified ourselves with him in his suffering and talked to him of how to get rid of it through political and social freedom. We told him of imperialism and of this new Act and constitution which bind us still further and which we were out to end and replace by panchayati raj, fashioned by a constituent assembly, a grand panchayat of the nation, elected by all our people. We read out to him our election manifesto and explained its significance. He and his kind gathered in vast numbers to hear us and, listening to the Congress message, his sunken eyes glistened and his shrunken starved body rose up in enthusiasm and the wine of hope filled his veins. Who, that saw that vision, can forget it, or that subsequent sight of thousands marching to the polling boths in disciplined array, ignoring pressure and threat, disdaining the free conveyances and free food offered to them by our opponents? It was a pilgrimage for them to give their allegiance to the Congress, to vote for the ending of the new constitution, for the establishment of panchyati raj when they would themselves have power to liquidate the poverty that consumed them.

That is the significance of this election. If there is any meaning in democracy, if this complicated and expensive apparatus of elections and voting has any sense behind it and is not an impertinent farce, then the Indian people have spoken so that even the deaf might hear, and proclaimed that they will not have this constitution. They have given notice to British imperialism to quit. This constitution must therefore go, lock, stock and barrel, and leave the field clear for our constituent assembly.

We talk of and discuss our policy in the legislatures, but all this is vain and profitless parleying before the fundamental and dominant fact of the situation that this constitution must go. So the people of India have decided and we shall be false and unfaithful representatives of our people if we allow ourselves to forget this fact contrary to that emphatic direction. . . .

[1] Presidential address at the All India Convention of Congress Legislators, Delhi, 19 March 1937. SWJN, Vol. VIII, pp. 64–71. Excerpts.

Ordinarily in a democratic constitution, to have a majority means an acceptance of ministerial responsibility. To refuse responsibility and power when a democratic process offers it to us is illogical and improper. But we have neither democracy nor power in this constitution; the illogicality and contradiction lie in the constitution itself. Are we to twist and distort ourselves to fit in with this perversion? Therefore whatever else we might do, that spirit of noncooperation and struggle against British imperialism must pervade our efforts.

Many of you are eager and desirous of doing something to relieve the burdens of our masses, to help the peasant and the worker and the vast numbers of middle class unemployed. Who does not want to do that? No one likes conflict and obstruction, and we have hungered so long for real opportunities for serving our people through constructive effort. They cry aloud for succour, these unhappy millions of our countrymen, and even when their voices are silent, their dumb eyes are eloquent with appeal. It is difficult to live in this country surrounded by this human desolation and misery, unspoken often and the harder to bear because of that. We talk of Swaraj and independence, but in human terms it means relief to the masses from their unutterable sorrow and misery. Ultimately all that we work for resolves itself into that. And if we have a chance to give such relief even in a small measure, we cannot reject it.

But that relief must be for the millions, not for a few odd individuals. And if we think in terms of those millions what relief does this new constitution offer? I have read its relevant clauses again and again, ever with a growing astonishment at the audacity of those who have framed it and thrust it on us, protecting all those who need no protection, confirming their privileged position as exploiters, binding us hand and foot not to touch them in any way, and leaving the masses of India to sink deeper in the quicksands of poverty. We cannot give adequate relief to the masses within the scope of this constitution; that is a demonstrable impossibility. We cannot build any new social structure so long as special privileges and vested interests surround us and suffocate us. We cannot carry out any policy, political, economic, social, educational or any other, when the whole executive agency and civil service is not subject to our control, and we may not touch the major part of the revenues. The 'special powers and responsibilities,' of the Governors and the Governor General apart, the Act by itself is more than sufficient to disable any minister.

But we can do some other things. We can take upon ourselves the odium and responsibility of keeping the imperialist structure functioning, we can become indirectly responsible for the repression of our own comrades, we can take away the initiative from the masses and tone down their fine temper which we ourselves have helped in building up. All this may happen if we follow the path of least resistance and gradually adapt ourselves to existing conditions. I do not think that this will happen for the temper of the Congress and the people will not allow it. We have gone too far for that.

Thus we do not seek the working of the new constitution but the most suitable way of meeting and creating deadlocks, which are inevitable in this scheme of things, and of carrying on our struggle for freedom.

I can see no flaw in my reasoning, if the premises of the Congress resolutions are accepted, as accept them we must. Whatever the A.I.C.C. may decide on this question of office acceptance, we shall have to carry on the spirit and letter of those resolutions in the legislatures as well as outside.

Our decisions must be all-India decisions, for it would be fatal to have variations in policy to suit the minor needs of the provinces. The unity of India has to be maintained; so also the unity of our struggle against imperialism. Danger lurks in provinces acting separately and being induced to parley separately. Therefore, as I conceive it, the chief virtue of this convention, now or later, is to keep this all-India character of our work in the legislatures ever in the forefront and to prevent fissiparous tendencies and the development of provincialism. A necessary counterpart of this is the maintenance of a uniform discipline among Congress members of all legislatures. Every effort is likely to be made on the part of our opponents to effect breaches in that discipline and all-India policy, but we must realize that without that self-imposed discipline and uniformity, our strength goes and we become isolated groups and individuals, ignored and crushed in turn by our opponents.

8

Congress and Civil Liberties[1]

Civil liberty is not for us merely an airy doctrine or a pious wish but something which we consider essential for the orderly development and progress of a nation. It is the civilized approach to a problem about which people differ, the nonviolent way of dealing with it. To crush a contrary opinion forcibly and allow it no expression, because we dislike it, is essentially of the same genus as cracking the skull of an opponent because we disapprove of him. It does not even possess the virtue of success. The man with the cracked skull might collapse and die, but the suppressed opinion or idea has no such sudden end and it survives and prospers the more it is sought to be crushed with force. History is full of such examples. Long experience has taught us that it is dangerous in the interest of truth to suppress opinions and ideas; it has further taught us that it is foolish to imagine that we can do so. It is far easier to meet an evil in the open and defeat it in fair combat in people's minds, than to drive it underground and have no hold on it or proper approach to it. Evil flourishes far more in the shadows than in the light of day.

But what is good and what is evil may itself be a doubtful matter, and who is then to decide? Governments all over the world are not known to be particularly competent in giving such decisions, and official censors are not an attractive crowd. Yet governments have to shoulder a heavy responsibility and they cannot discuss the philosophy of a question when action is demanded. In our imperfect world we have often to prefer a lesser evil to a greater one.

For us it is not merely a matter of giving effect to a programme to which we have given adherence. Our entire approach to the question must be psychologically different. It cannot be the policeman's approach which has been so characteristic of the British Government in India, the method of force and violence and coercion. Congress ministers should avoid, as far as possible, all coercive process and should try to win over their critics by their actions and, where possible, by personal contacts. Even if they fail in converting the critic or the opponent, they will make him innocuous, and the public sympathy, which almost invariably goes to a victim of official action, will no longer be his.

[1] Allahabad, 30 August 1937, *The Leader*, 4–6 September 1937. Reprinted in *Eighteenth Months in India*, pp. 285–300. Excerpts.

They will win the public to their side and thus create an atmosphere which is not favourable to wrong action.

But in spite of this approach and this desire to avoid coercive action, occasions may arise when Congress ministers cannot avoid taking some such action. No government can tolerate the preaching of violence and communal strife, and if this unfortunately takes place, it has to be curbed by having recourse to the coercive processes of the ordinary law. We believe that there should be no police censorship or banning of books and newspapers and the largest freedom should be given to the expression of opinions and ideas. The way we have been cut off from progressive literature from abroad by the policy of the British Government is a public scandal. We must get rid of these bans and censorships and nurture the free soil from which the life of the intellect can grow and the creative faculties can take shape. But still, it must be remembered that there may be exceptional cases of books and newspapers which are so manifestly of an obscene character or promote violence or communal hatred and conflict that some action to check them has to be taken.

A number of political prisoners, convicted for violent activities, have recently been released by the Congress ministries after long terms in prison. They have been welcomed by the public and by Congressmen, and we have been asked if this welcome did not signify an approval of violence. That question reveals an ignorance of public psychology and of the minds of Congressmen. The public and Congressmen alike welcomed them because of the mantle of long suffering that they bore. How many of them had spent their entire youth in prison, how many had faced death without flinching?

They had erred and pursued a wrong path, they had followed a policy injurious to the very cause they sought to serve, but they had paid for it in pain and torment and by long years in solitary cells. They had come to realize that the old policy of theirs was utterly wrong. And so the public welcomed them and friendly faces greeted them wherever they went. Has this not got a lesson for governments who imagine that by suppressing a number of individuals they solve a problem? They succeed thereby in intensifying that very problem, and public sympathy, which might well have been against the individual's deeds, turns to him because of his suffering.

The problem of the political prisoners in the Andamans[2] is with us today and we see the amazing folly of the Government in pursuing a policy which is creating a frenzy of excitement among the public. Thus they intensify the very atmosphere which they seek to remove.

The Congress ministries have rightly followed a contrary policy because they try to move with public approval, and seek to win over these brave young men, and create an atmosphere favourable to the working of the Congress

[2] Two hundred political prisoners were on hunger-strike in the Andamans in protest about the inhumane conditions.

programme. In that favourable atmosphere even wrong tendencies will wilt and wither away. Everybody of any consequence in Indian politics knows that terrorism is a thing of the past in India. It would have vanished even earlier but for the policy of the British Government in Bengal. Violence is not killed by violence, but by a different approach and by removing the causes which lead to it.

On these comrades of ours, who have been released after one or two decades of prison life, rests a special responsibility to be loyal to the Congress policy and to work for the fulfilment of the Congress programme. The foundation of that policy is nonviolence and the noble structure of the Congress has been built on that firm foundation. It is necessary that this should be remembered by all Congressmen, for it is even more important today than it has so far been. Loose talk encouraging violence and communal conflict is especially harmful at the present juncture and it might do grave injury to the Congress cause, as well as embarrass the Congress ministries. We are no longer children in politics; we have grown to man's estate and we have big work ahead, big conflicts to face, difficulties to overcome. Let us face them like men with courage and dignity and discipline. Only through a great organization deriving its sanctions from the masses can we face our problems, and great mass organizations are built up through peaceful methods.

The basic problems of India relate to the peasantry and the industrial workers, and of the two, the agrarian problem is far the most important. The Congress ministries have already begun to tackle this, and executive orders have been passed to bring some temporary relief to the masses. Even this little thing has brought joy and hope to our peasants and they are looking forward eagerly to the greater change to come. There is some danger in this eager expectation of the paradise to come, for there is no immediate paradise in prospect. The Congress ministries, with the best will in the world, are incapable of changing the social order and the present economic system. They are bound down and restricted in a hundred ways and have to move in a narrow orbit. That indeed was, and is, a principal reason for our opposition to this new constitution. We must therefore be perfectly frank with our people and tell them what we can do and what we cannot do under present conditions. That very inability of ours becomes a powerful argument in favour of the vital change which will give us real power.

But meanwhile we have to go as far as we possibly can to give relief to them. We must face this task courageously and not be afraid of vested interests and those who would obstruct us. The real measure of the success of Congress ministries will be the change in the agrarian laws that they bring about and the relief they give to the peasantry. This change in the laws will come from the legislature, but the value of that change will be enhanced if the Congress members of the legislatures keep in close touch with their constituencies and inform the peasantry of their policies.

Congress parties in the legislatures should also keep in touch with Congress committees and with the public generally. By this frank approach they will get the friendly cooperation of the public and will be in touch with the realities of the situation. The masses will thus also be trained and disciplined in the democratic method.

A change in the land laws will bring some relief to our peasantry, but our objective is a much bigger one and for that the pre-requisite is the development of the organized strength of the peasantry. Only by their own strength can they ultimately progress or resist the inroads that vested interests might make on them. A boon given from above to a weak peasantry may be taken away later, and even a good law may have little value because it cannot be enforced. The proper organization of the peasants in Congress committees in villages thus becomes essential.

In regard to the industrial workers, the Congress has not so far developed a detailed programme because the agrarian situation dominates the Indian scene. Some important principles have, however, been laid down in the Karachi resolution and in the election manifesto. Labour's right to form unions and to strike has been recognized and the principle of the living wage approved of. The policy recently outlined by the Bombay Government in respect of industrial workers has the general approval of the Working Committee. This policy is by no means a final policy or an ideal one. But it represents what can be attempted and done under present conditions and within a relatively short period of time. I have no doubt that if this programme is given effect to, it will bring relief to labour and, what is even more important, give it organizational strength. The very basis of this programme and policy is the strengthening of workers' organizations. The Bombay Government declare, in their statement of labour policy, that "they are convinced that no legislative programme can be a substitute for the organized strength of the working class, and till organizations of workers, run on genuine trade union lines, grow up in the various fields of employment, no lasting good can accrue. Government are therefore anxious to assist in removing real hindrances in the way of the growth of the organization and to promote collective bargaining between the employers and the employees. Means will be devised to discourage victimization of workers for connection with a labour organization and participation in legitimate trade union activity."

With regard to trade disputes, the Bombay Government propose legislation to ensure that no reduction in wages or other change in the conditions of employment to the disadvantage of the workers should take place till they have had sufficient time and opportunity for having the facts and merits of the proposed change examined and all avenues of peaceful settlement of the dispute explored, either through the channel of voluntary negotiation, conciliation or arbitration, or by the machinery of the law. A corresponding obligation would rest on the workers in respect of demands on their behalf. This means that before a trade dispute develops into open conflict there must be an intermediate

stage of negotiation or arbitration. It does not mean that there is compulsory arbitration ending in an award which is finally binding on all parties whether they accept it or not.

Compulsory arbitration of this latter kind has always been opposed by labour for it strikes at the root of one of their most cherished rights—the right to strike. They also fear with considerable justification that in such a compulsory proceeding in a capitalist country, the weight of the state is likely to be cast on the side of the employers. And so they would be tied hand and foot, unable to use the only weapon which they possess and which a century of hard struggle has given them. That is not the present proposal for that would be contrary to the Congress policy of recognizing the workers' right to strike. That right to strike is fully maintained, but an intermediate stage is provided for to explore avenues of settlement of the dispute. This policy, I am convinced, will be highly to the advantage of all concerned, and especially of labour. Our labour is weak and disorganized and unable to stand up for its rights. The long record of sporadic strikes is a record of almost continuous failure. It is true that even unsuccessful strikes sometimes strengthen the labour movement, but the reverse is still more true, and the present feeble state of our labour movement bears witness to this. For years past labour has been fighting a constant rearguard action against wage-cuts, almost helpless to prevent them. If some such legislation, as is proposed in Bombay, had been in existence, it would have been far more difficult to reduce wages and labour would have been in a much better position to bargain on equal terms with the employers, with probably a friendly public opinion to back it.

The strike is a powerful weapon, the only real weapon of labour. It has to be cherished and preserved and used in an organized and disciplined way with effect when necessity arises. To use it casually and sporadically is to blunt it and thus weaken labour itself. Behind the strike there must be a strong organization and public opinion. This organization seldom develops if there are frequent partial and sporadic strikes which fail.

Organization therefore is the primary need of labour, and all who wish well for labour must help in the building up of strong trade unions. They must remember that any form of violence, whether during a strike or at other times, is injurious to labour's interests. It drives the state into the opposing ranks and provokes far greater violence on the part of the states. It disorganizes labour and irritates public opinion. In India it sometimes leads to communal violence which diverts attention immediately from labour's demands. Labour, above everything, cannot afford to be communal or to encourage communalism.

9

The A.I.C.C. and After[1]

Friends and colleagues ask me questions about the recent developments in the Congress, about the A.I.C.C. meeting, the formation of the Forward Bloc,[2] and the happenings in Rajkot. In courtesy to them I discuss these matters, and sometimes to old friends and comrades I give a glimpse of my troubled mind. But their questions are seldom answered as they should be, and I am unable to unravel the tangle that is presented to me. I fear I give little satisfaction to them and yet that is not surprising, for I give even less satisfaction to myself. It is not out of this stuff that leadership comes, and the sooner my colleagues realize this the better for them and me. The mind functions efficiently enough, the intellect is trained to carry on through habit, but the springs that give life and vitality to that functioning seem to dry up. And so I hesitate to write on these subjects and the idea of public speaking is increasingly distasteful to me. . . .

The tragedy of Spain and much that has happened in the West has been a personal sorrow to me, leaving a deep and lasting impress. But Spain is far, and the problems of India fill my mind and distress me. It is not external difficulty that troubles, but the whole background of India with its conflicts and disruptive forces, its pettiness and mutual suspicion. There is no faith in us today of each other and every foolish statement and wild charge is believed. Vulgarity, that most distressful symptom, creeps into our public life, in the Congress and even more outside it. Policies and programmes and high principles have their importance; they are vital and urgent. But behind them all lies the human material without which these principles and policies can have little meaning.

Tripuri was a painful experience in many ways, and many of us returned from it heavy at heart. The subsequent press controversy and the fierce personal attacks that accompanied it, filled me with sorrow. I felt helpless to check these

[1] Lucknow, 24 May 1939. *National Herald*, 27–28 May 1939.

[2] Subhas Chandra Bose was elected President of the Congress in 1939. The majority of the Congress preferred Gandhi's leadership. Twelve Working Committee members resigned and carried a resolution at the Tripuri Congress that Bose should nominate a new Committee in consultation with Gandhi. Gandhi did not cooperate resulting in Bose resigning his presidency and setting up a new party. Jawaharlal Nehru did not concur with the treatment meted out to Bose, declined to sign the letter of resignation and tried to patch up a compromise.

developments, being out of tune with the participants on either side. At the A.I.C.C. meeting in Calcutta I had hoped that we would end this wrangling, and go down to straight work. I laboured for this to the best of my ability, but without success.

In Calcutta I did not agree with all the suggestions that Subhas Babu had put forward, but I was convinced that he was earnestly striving to a united functioning of the Congress, accepting the Tripuri decision. I saw no reason why there should be any difficulty in bringing this about but opposition, which seemed to me wholly unjustified, came and led to his resignation. Perhaps that resignation was inevitable under the circumstances, and yet I regretted it deeply, for it led to a deepening of the fissures that separated individuals and groups in the Congress. I regretted even more the absence of a spirit of accommodation during the A.I.C.C. meeting in Calcutta.

Under these circumstances I could not join the new Working Committee. I had long been out of tune with the old Committee, but I had continued membership of it as I believed that the larger interest required it. With the new developments in Calcutta my place was outside, though not in any spirit of opposition or noncooperation. Such cooperation as I could give was always at Rajen Babu's disposal, and I appreciated greatly the courage with which he had agreed to shoulder the heavy burden and to face a disagreeable task.

But it is idle to ignore the differences that exist and tend to grow. Those differences are partly ideological and even more so temperamental, with a strong background of mutual suspicion. The Congress presidential election in January last was no vote of no-confidence against anyone or any policy, for no such issue had been framed or put before the voters. But it was a clear indication of dissatisfaction with things as they were and a desire to mend them. It has a lesson for all of us. That lesson has unfortunately not been learnt.

This refusal to learn and understand, this inability to adapt oneself to a growing situation, leads to resentment in the minds of many. There is a sense of frustration and suppression, which is the parent of suspicion and conflict. I have myself had this feeling of frustration and I can well understand others, less favourably situated, reacting in like manner and to a greater degree. I can appreciate the desire to end or lessen this sense of frustration by an effort to bring together those who, broadly speaking, think alike and are desirous of functioning together and thus get rid of the feeling of individual helplessness which tends to overwhelm them.

But we may not, simply because we are driven by a sense of resentment, take a step which weakens us and leads to worse consequences. The world is in a sad mess today, tragic to those who are sensitive, heart-breaking to those who feel. We assure ourselves that we are living during an age of transition and that the sorrows of today are but the birth-pangs of the new order. It may be so, or perhaps our wishes are fathers to our thoughts. Meanwhile we go through this agony, almost unendurable at times, and there is little hope of comfort in the

future that we can see. Everywhere there is a cracking up, a dissolution of things as they are, but the building up of a new structure is not so evident. Ruling classes and groups, who have dominated affairs for so long, exhibit their utter incompetence and grow increasingly ineffective and incapable of dealing with the problems of today. And yet no other group or class appears strong enough or competent enough to take the reins of affairs in its hands. History has few examples of sheer ineptitude and failure such as Mr. Neville Chamberlain and the British Government have exhibited; but Mr. Chamberlain and his Government continue for lack of others to take their place.

The world situation affects us, but even more so internal conditions point the same way. It is not outside the bounds of possibility that fascist elements, with apparently anti-imperialist slogans, may gain strength and power in our country and even in our national organization. There is sometimes a cry that the Congress High Command is adopting fascist methods. The High Command, as it is called, may have erred often enough, and it has certainly acted sometimes in an authoritarian way. But to suggest that it tends towards fascist methods, is to exhibit ignorance. There is a good deal of fascism in the country today and a little of it even inside the Congress. It flourishes chiefly under communal colours and in some so-called non-political organizations. But the old leadership of the Congress, whatever its other failings, is far removed from it. Curiously enough, among the loudest of its critics are the fascist elements in the Congress.

Subhas Babu's step in forming a Forward Bloc is an understandable corollary to what has happened, yet it is not necessarily a desirable one, for there are obvious dangers involved in it. It is, so far as is known at present, a negative grouping, an anti-bloc, whose sole binding cement is dislike of, or opposition to, the individuals or groups that control the Congress today. There is no positive policy based on definite principles, except a desire to ginger them up generally. There is no restriction which might keep out elements which, politically or otherwise, are undesirable. The doors of the Bloc are wide open, and it is evident enough that a very miscellaneous company are likely to find shelter in it. We have had, and have, plenty of trouble in the Congress itself with the adventurist and opportunist elements that have crept in. Long tradition and the inherent strength of the organization keep them in check to some extent, and we are now thinking of devising rules to control them still further.

But in a new organization or grouping without this tradition and checks and without any clear principles and ideology, such adventurist and opportunist elements will find full play, and might even, under cover of fine phrases, play a dominating role in it. It is quite possible that fascist and communal elements might also enter its folds and seek to exploit it to further their animus against the Congress and its anti-fascist policy. How will Subhas Babu deal with this situation when it arises? We must remember that fascism grew in Europe under cover or radical slogans and popular phrases.

It will be easy for fascism to function under cover of our nationalism, and

yet to give a wrong and dangerous bent to it. Already we are told that nationalism is in essence racialism, and therefore we must lay stress on the idea of our race and a hostility to other races. That has not been the nationalism under which we have grown up. Take another aspect of the question. Our war resistance policy is of vital importance to us. It has been adopted because of our love of freedom and democracy and our insistence on Indian independence. Now that very policy might be given a twist and made to fit in with fascist desires.

The fascist powers would very much like India to be a thorn in the side of England when war comes, so that they might profit by the situation we create. There is nothing that we would dislike so much as to play into the hands of the fascist powers, just as we dislike being exploited by imperialist Britain. Our anti-war policy must therefore be based on freedom and democracy and opposition to fascism and imperialism. And yet with a little twist it might well be turned into a pro-fascist policy.

These are some of the dangers of the Forward Bloc. It is a little difficult to consider it positively as no clear indication of its policy is available. The only attempt to clothe the Bloc with a garment of a definite policy, so far as I know, has been made by Shri M.N. Roy in a series of able speeches and articles.[3] Do his views represent the policy of the Bloc, or do they, at any rate, influence this policy considerably? Their views, whether one agrees with them or not, represent a certain definite outlook and programme which is clearly at variance with anything we have done so far and which means a complete break with the past.[4] I do not agree with this general outlook and approach, and I think that it is utterly out of touch with reality in India today. . . .

The attempt to form a Forward Bloc or any such grouping inevitably results in the consolidation of other groups opposed to it. That, of course, is no reason why a group should not be formed, but it is a reason for it to be formed only at the proper time and in the proper way. Otherwise the immediate result is to strengthen the opposing groups, and to bring about a bitter conflict within the organization for control of various communities. Such conflicts have to be faced in a democratic organization, but it would be unfortunate if we became wrapped up in them on the eve of internal and external crises.

These are some of my difficulties in regard to the Forward Bloc. But

[3] For instance, M.N. Roy said on 24 May 1939: "If the Bloc is only an *ad hoc* organization with the purpose of catching some more seats in an A.I.C.C. meeting, I think that would be simply an opportunist fight for some leading positions without effective power of operation . . ." He hoped that the Bloc "may become an instrument for the mobilization of the leftists in the Congress and the present vagueness of its policy may disappear in course of that process."

[4] At the Serampore political conference on 19 May 1939, Bose declared that "the main programme of the Bloc would be to consolidate all the left forces in the country and to organize a volunteer corps throughout British India and Indian States as well as to prepare the country for the impending fight against British imperialism."

whichever way I look I find difficulty. The recent developments in Rajkot have an obvious importance and they are certain to have far-reaching repercussions not only in the states but in all India. How far do they represent a change in Gandhiji's approach to political problems, how far will they affect the policy of the Congress which he dominates? Gandhiji may be right in what he has done in Rajkot; without more and detailed knowledge I am not entitled to express an opinion. But the various processes he has gone through during the past few months in connection with Rajkot are exceedingly difficult to understand or appreciate, and I do not see how a political movement can be guided in this way. When I had the honour of being elected president of the All India States People's Conference,[5] I knew well that I could not work any wonders or do anything out of the ordinary. The whole question of the States is a vast and complicated one, varying in form and substance in different areas, and yet having an underlying unity. I hoped, however, to be able to do something to coordinate these various movements and activities and to give them a common background. But I realized soon that any activity of mine might not be in tune with what Gandhiji was doing in regard to the States. I had no desire to say or do anything which might come into conflict with him, as this would produce confusion in the States. And so I remained quiet and more or less inactive. I felt disabled.

That sense of helplessness increases after the Rajkot events. I cannot function where I do not understand, and I do not understand at all the logic of what has taken place. This applies to the wider plane of all-India politics also.

I have had a considerable measure of belief in Gandhiji's vision and instinctive reaction to events. I have welcomed the moral tone he has given to our public life. His vital and prodigious contribution to our struggle for freedom is an essential part of India's history. I think that he has yet to play a greater part in our struggle and in fashioning our future. I hope that it will be India's good fortune to have him for many years.

But more and more the choice before many of us becomes difficult, and this is no question of right or left or even of political decisions. The choice is of unthinking acceptance of decisions which sometimes contradict each other and have no logical sequence, or opposition, or inaction. Not one of these three courses is easily commendable. To accept unthinkingly what one cannot appreciate or willingly agree to produces ultimately mental flabbiness and paralysis. No great movement can be carried on on this basis; certainly not a democratic movement. Opposition is difficult when it weakens us and helps the adversary. Inaction produces frustration and all manner of complexes, and is hardly conceivable when from every side comes the call for action.

That is the problem before many of us.

[5] In February 1939.

10

India and the War[1]

Events march on, overtopping each other, pushed onward by some implacable urge. Elemental forces sweep the world, disdaining the scheming of those who, from their seats of authority, had sought to stem them. Men and women become playthings of destiny and are drawn into the seething whirlpool of war. Whither do we all go, what will be the outcome of this conflict where peoples and nations fight desperately for survival, none can tell. Yet we can say that the world we have known is dissolving before our eyes—to give place to what?

In this tragic world drama of epic significance what part will India play? In words of power and dignity the Working Committee have indicated the road we have to travel. Though the final decision has not been made, the fundamental principles governing this decision have been laid down. The basic decision has been made already and the application of this to existing circumstances has yet to be made. That application depends now on how far those basic principles are accepted and applied in the present by the British Government. Briefly put, India can no longer consent to be treated as a part of an empire. She will not permit herself to be used as a subject nation ordered about by others. Whether in peace or war she must function as a free nation.

Nothing is so astonishing in recent history as the complete bankruptcy of the British Government prior to the war. Truly it may be said that by their own policy they have brought all their troubles upon themselves and the world. Manchuria, Abyssinia, Czechoslovakia, Spain, and the insulting treatment offered to Soviet Russia last year have step by step brought the catastrophe nearer, and now we have all plunged into the abyss. England faces this crisis with courage and determination, but she has to carry the heavy burden of her past policy, and, in the light of that policy, her present declarations in favour of democracy and freedom carry little weight. Even now the chance is offered her to throw the burden and rid herself of her imperialist tradition, and thus unhampered march with equal partners to the goal of freedom for all. There is no other way. Is she wise enough or great enough to follow this path willingly and with faith in it?

[1] Editorial in the *National Herald*, 21 September 1939.

So far she has shown singular lack of wisdom and has taken various steps in relation to India which have been completely at variance with the declared will of the Indian people. Does she think that a proud people, conscious of their strength, can accept such treatment? India can no longer be dragged or pushed or compelled to follow the dictates of external authority. The time has come to put an end to the idea of empire and to seek the friendship and cooperation of free nations. India must be accepted and treated as a free country on terms of equality. Any other course leads to conflict and misfortune for all concerned.

For our own people, as for others, this is a time of trial and testing. If we fail in this test, we are left behind and others march ahead. We cannot and must not think in terms of this party or that, of this community or religious group or another, of right or left consolidations. The hour calls for national consolidation in the great cause of Indian and world freedom. To continue our petty bickerings and lay stress on differences, to suspect evil motives in one another, to seek advantage for a group or a party, is to demonstrate our pettiness when great issues are at stake. That way lies disservice to India and her people.

The Working Committee have given the lead; India has spoken and her voice has found an echo in our hearts. Let us all stand by it and not raise jarring notes in this hour of destiny. Every Congressman must weigh his words and measure his action, so that he says or does nothing to weaken the national resolve or take away from the dignity of the Congress. We hold together, we speak together and we shall act together for the sake of India whose love has inspired us so long and whose service has been our high privilege. The future beckons to us. Let us march in step to the goal of freedom.

11

Resolution on the War[1]

The Working Committee have been deeply moved by the tragic events that have taken place in Europe in startling succession and, in particular, by the misfortunes that have befallen the people of France.[2] These events have already had far-reaching consequences, and they are likely to be followed by other happenings which will lead to novel situations and complex problems in India and the world. This Committee have given earnest thought to these, for they have to bear the heavy burden of advising the people of India as to the course they should adopt in this dynamic and revolutionary crisis.

Ever since the commencement of the European war, the Congress has followed a deliberate policy in its resolution and the action it has taken, which found its natural culmination in the Ramgarh resolution.[3] That policy was based on the principles of the Congress, its past declarations, the response of the British Government to its invitation, and the desire that India should function as a free and independent country. Subsequent events have abundantly justified the wisdom of this policy, and the Ramgarh resolution of the Congress holds and declares this policy to the world. The manner of the application of this policy will necessarily depend on the situation which changes from day to day. Problems which were distant are now near at hand and may soon demand solution. The Committee which has so far considered the question of the achievement of power, has now also to consider how such power is to be maintained, and how a state should function in accordance with the principles which the Congress holds. In particular, this applies to the principle of nonviolence which it has been the proud privilege of the Congress to proclaim to the world for the past twenty years.

The war in Europe, resulting from a suicidal race in armaments and a desire for imperialist domination over other countries and peoples, has already led to inhumanities and barbarities on a mass scale, to the wanton butchery of civilians and non-combatants, including women and children, and to human

[1] This Congress Working Committee Resolution on the War was drafted by Jawaharlal Nehru, 20 June 1940. JN Papers, NMML.

[2] On 14 June 1940, German troops entered Paris and the French Government sought an armistice.

[3] The Indian National Congress adopted a resolution on India and the War Crisis at Ramgarh in March 1940.

sorrow and misery on a vast scale. It has led to certain temporary triumphs of organized and intensive violence, but it has also demonstrated the inefficacy of organized violence for the defence of national freedom and the liberties of peoples. This war has shown beyond a doubt that modern warfare cannot lead to peace and freedom, and the choice before the world is destruction and uttermost degradation through warfare or the way of peace and nonviolence on a basis of freedom for all peoples. At a time so critical in the history of man, the Congress, under the inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi, has presented to the peoples of the world, thirsting for relief from the crushing burden of war, a weapon in the shape of organized nonviolence designed to take the place of war for the defence of a people's rights and freedom.

But the Working Committee are fully aware of their limitations and of the limitations of Congressmen in the practice of nonviolence, which, because of these limitations, has not proved efficacious in the solution of communal distemper and other internal disorders. Nevertheless, ever since the Congress adopted nonviolence as its policy in the pursuit of its goal of complete political and economic independence, Congressmen have tested its efficacy in the fight against British domination. They have witnessed under its spell a phenomenal awakening among the masses.

The Working Committee desire to proclaim afresh their belief in the principle of nonviolence and their firm faith that in the effective application of this principle will the world find relief from war and its horrors. To that end, and with this principle always in view, the Committee will continue to advise the people of India in the struggle for national independence and world freedom and cooperation. True nonviolence is a weapon of the strong and not a refuge for the weak as some people have considered it. But the Committee cannot ignore the present imperfections and failings in this respect of the human nature they have to deal with, and or the possible dangers in a period of revolutionary transition, if the masses have not imbibed sufficiently the lesson of organized nonviolence and the Congress has not acquired nonviolent control over them. Nor can the Committee lay down now that in all circumstances, and whatever world conditions might be, a free India must necessarily discard the use of arms in repelling external aggression or in dealing with internal disorder. A state has certain duties and obligations to its people and it should make every endeavour to discharge them peacefully and without violence or coercion. But if circumstances prevent it from discharging them in this way, it cannot abdicate its functions, so long as it has the confidence of the people, and is compelled to use, under existing circumstances, armed force. The Committee earnestly hope that, out of the horror and catastrophe of the present war, conditions will arise which will eliminate the use of armed force.

The Working Committee have deliberated over this vital question at length, and they owe it to the public to take them into their confidence and to

place before them their viewpoint with clarity. This is necessary all the more because in this matter of the application of nonviolence to external aggression and internal disorder, they have the misfortune not to be wholly in agreement with Mahatma Gandhi, whose leadership and advice it has been their high privilege to have for the past twenty years. That leadership and advice will, they are convinced, still be theirs and India's in the trials ahead. But Gandhiji's firm faith in the efficacy of nonviolence, under all circumstances, does not permit him to tolerate any deviation from it and he desires to have complete freedom for himself, and without any commitment to the Congress, to pursue a policy of active nonviolence in the pursuit of the goal which he shares with the Congress and with vast numbers of people in India.

Many of the problems which the Working Committee have considered are not of the present, though they may be of the near future. In any event the Committee wish to make it clear that the creed of nonviolence of the Congress continues with full force and all Congressmen and Congress volunteers must abide by it.

Some Congressmen have advocated that the Congress should resume office in the provincial governments in order to utilize the government machinery at their disposal to take steps for training citizens in the use of arms. Such a proposal is entirely opposed to Congress policy and the Committee cannot envisage any return to office except in a free India. Only a free India can also consider, if she so chooses, the training of her citizens. Any such training, given under present conditions, may well be to the disadvantage of India and may militate against the national policy.

Nor can Congressmen associate themselves in any way with the proposed official Civic Guards. The War Committees that are being formed are definitely aimed at increasing the war effort, and, in view of the Congress policy, they cannot be supported and Congressmen cannot participate in them or contribute funds to war loans. While the Congress has gone to the utmost length in not taking any step so far to cause embarrassment to the British Government, it must always be remembered that the Congress policy is not to give any cooperation in the pursuit of war. This policy is laid down in the Ramgarh resolution and Congressmen are expected to adhere to it.

In view of the difficult times that loom ahead, it is essential that the Congress should function as an active disciplined organization. Those who have taken the satyagraha pledge[4] must abide by the terms of the pledge, and if they

[4] After the Ramgarh session a new satyagraha pledge was drawn up on the lines of the pledge adopted at the Congress session at Ahmedabad in 1921. The satyagrahi pledged himself to remain nonviolent, promote unity among all races, work for the eradication of untouchability, spin regularly and use hand-spun and hand-woven cloth and be prepared to be imprisoned and in the event of imprisonment make no claims on the Congress to support him or his dependents.

are not prepared to act up to it, their names should be removed from the list of satyagrahis. Members of the Congress who are in basic disagreement with the principles and policy of the Congress and express this disagreement publicly should resign from the Congress. Provincial Committees are authorized to take necessary steps for this purpose. They should realize that it is of urgent and vital importance that the Congress should be an active, functioning and disciplined organization, and not merely a roll of inactive members.

The critical situation that faces the world today requires vigilant attention and action whenever needed. For this purpose the Working Committee will meet at frequent intervals and all members must keep in readiness to obey an urgent summons. An Emergency Committee consisting of the President and.....[5] is hereby formed with authority to act in the name of the Working Committee when occasion may demand. The All India Congress Committee should be summoned to meet in the last week of July.

[5] As in the original.

12

The Price of Freedom[1]

Whatever the future may bring us, it is my conviction that our full freedom will not come without struggle and travail and sorrow. In this world of war and conflict, we may not escape the price of freedom. To expect otherwise is to delude oneself. That future will ultimately depend on the strength of the Indian people and on the organized power of the Congress. To increase that organized strength, therefore, all our energies must be directed. We must think of the immediate future and grasp whatever opportunity that offers itself to advance our cause.

I have been finding it difficult to decide dogmatically on the issues before us. I was never guided by dogmas and slogans but by certain principles. There might be many things which I may love to do and which may result in glorifying me but ultimately I will not be advancing our cause. I have no use for those things. Our one objective is the independence of the country. I am not afraid of internal chaos or other disorders that might be in store for us. Nevertheless I cannot be a party to creating chaos for chaos's sake and I believe none of us will be a party to it. The Congress should remain the powerful organization it has been all these years. It will be no good to the country if the Congress goes to pieces.

I do not want to blaze the trail and leave it to the future to achieve the fruits of it. I want to achieve those fruits now and today, if I see a possibility for doing so. I want to think in terms of power in the immediate future. This has restrained me. The other members of the Working Committee and I have the responsibility for guiding the affairs of the Congress and I feel that the time has now come when we should think in terms of achieving things and not merely in terms of speeches or shouting from platforms.

It may be that the dancing star of independence may emerge out of chaos, but is may also be that nothing but black clouds may emerge. So it may be wise not to create chaos at certain times.

[1] Statement to the AICC, Poona, 28 July 1940.

13

Quit India Resolution[1]

19 September 1942

The A.I.C.C. meeting in Bombay on the 7th and 8th August. Busy days, and yet the burden of having to decide was cast aside and I felt lighter.[2] The Working Committee resolution for the A.I.C.C. had been issued. The decision had been made and I was well satisfied with it. The resolution was good; I liked it. The operative part of the decision, authorizing Gandhiji to start mass C.D., was inevitable and the course of recent events had led us to it by an inexorable logic. There was no escape from it, nor did I want to escape. More and more I had felt that passivity was injurious to our cause, as well as, ultimately, to the cause of China, USSR, etc. Possibly this conviction was due to an attempt to rationalize conflicting trends in my mind. I had long been troubled and distressed at the thought that we might do something which might mean breaking faith with China. This was intolerable to me, and again and again I had said so in W.C. and elsewhere. On the other hand, the Indian position and outlook demanded some action. There was the impasse: how to act and yet not to injure in anyway China's effort, etc. The rationalizing process started. It became clearer to me that this war cannot lead to right results so long as the whole conception behind it does not change. It must in effect be thought of in revolutionary terms, and, so far as Asiatic and African countries are concerned, must now lead to the ending of the imperial idea and tradition. India becomes the touchstone and the acid test. A free, independent India makes a vast difference, not only to us in India, but to the whole conception of European or American domination and superiority. Obviously the post-bellum condition becomes entirely different from the status quo. Every Asiatic nation, including China, benefits tremendously. There is a clear line of demarcation between the free nations and the Axis imperialist powers—and so on.

[1] Note, 19 September 1942. SWJN, Vol. 13, pp. 2–3.

[2] The 'Quit India' resolution of the All India Congress Committee was moved by Jawaharlal Nehru on 7 August 1942. It authorized Mahatma Gandhi to launch a struggle if all attempts to arrive at an honourable settlement failed. Mahatma Gandhi had declared that he would take the earliest opportunity to seek an interview with the Viceroy towards that end.

It is clear that England certainly, and possibly America are not yet prepared to accept such a revolutionary change. They even prefer to endanger and weaken their positions in this war, rather than accept this notion. Hence the difficulty.

There is no way out for us except to challenge this position and face the consequences. What will be the consequences? No one knows.

14

Central Assembly Elections[1]

For sixty years the National Congress has laboured for the freedom of India. During this long span of years its history has been the history of the Indian people, straining at the leash that has held them in bondage, ever trying to break the chains of subjection and alien rule. From small beginnings it has progressively grown and spread in this vast country, carrying the message of freedom to the masses of our people in the towns as well as the remotest villages. From these masses it has gained power and strength and developed into a mighty organization, the living and vibrant symbol of India's will to freedom and independence. From generation to generation it has dedicated itself to this sacred cause, and in its name and under its banner, innumerable countrymen and countrywomen of ours have laid down their lives and undergone lifelong suffering, in order to redeem the pledge they had taken. By service and sacrifice, it has enshrined itself in the hearts of our people; by its refusal to submit to any dishonour to our nation, it has built up a powerful movement of resistance to foreign imperialist rule.

The career of the Congress has been one of both constructive effort for the good of the people and of unceasing struggle to gain freedom. In this struggle it has faced numerous crises and come repeatedly into direct conflict with the armed might of a great empire. Following peaceful methods, it has not only survived these conflicts, but has gained new strength from them. After the recent three years of an unprecedented mass upheaval and its cruel and ruthless suppression, involving terrible suffering for our people, the Congress has risen again stronger than ever and more loved by the people by whom it has stood through storm and stress.

The Congress has stood for the independence of India and for equal rights and opportunities for every citizen of India. It has stood for the unity of all communities and religious groups in India and for tolerance and goodwill between them. It has stood for the right of the Indian people as a whole to have full opportunities for growth and self-development according to their own

[1] 10 October 1945. JN Papers, NMML. The Manifesto for Central Assembly Elections was drafted by Jawaharlal Nehru. The final version had certain changes made by Mahatma Gandhi.

wishes and the genius of the nation. It has also stood for the freedom of each group and territorial area within the nation to develop its own life and culture within the larger framework. For those who suffer from social tyranny and injustice, it has stood for the removal of all barriers to equality, and special help from the state and society in order to raise them from their backward and depressed state.

The Congress has envisaged a free, democratic state with the fundamental rights and civil liberties of all its citizens guaranteed in the constitution. This constitution, in its view, should be a federal one with a great deal of autonomy for its constituent units, and its legislative organs elected under adult franchise. In regard to the franchise, as other matters, sex should be no bar and women should take full part as citizens in national activities.

A hundred and fifty years and more of foreign rule have arrested the growth of the country and produced numerous vital problems that demand immediate solution. Intensive exploitation of the country and the people during this period has reduced the masses to the depths of misery, starvation and beggary. The country has not only been politically kept under subjection and humiliated, but has also suffered economic, social, cultural and spiritual degradation. During the years of war, and even now, this process of exploitation by irresponsible authority and complete ignoring of Indian interests and views has reached a new height of incompetence in the administration, leading to terrible famine and widespread misery among our people. There is no way to solve these urgent problems except through freedom and independence. But the content of political freedom must be economic and social freedom also.

The most vital and urgent of India's problems is how to remove the curse of poverty and raise the standards of the masses. It is to the well-being and progress of these masses that the Congress has directed its special attention and its constructive activities. It is by their well-being and advancement that it has judged every change, and it has declared that anything that comes in the way of the good of the masses of our country must be removed. Industry and agriculture, the social services and public utilities must be encouraged, modernized and rapidly extended in order to add to the wealth of the country and give it the capacity for self-growth, without dependence on others. But all this must be done with the primary object and paramount duty of benefiting the masses of our people and raising their economic, cultural and spiritual level, removing unemployment, and adding to the dignity of the individual. For this purpose, it will be necessary to plan and coordinate social advance in all its many fields, to prevent the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of individuals and groups, to prevent vested interests inimical to society from growing, and to have social control of the mineral resources, means of transport and the principal methods of production and distribution, as well as of banking and

exchange. Cooperation should be encouraged in land, industry and other departments of national activity so that free India may develop into a cooperative commonwealth.

In international affairs the Congress stands for the establishment of a world federation of free nations. Till such time as such a federation takes shape, India must develop friendly relations with all nations and particularly with her neighbours on the east and the west and the north. In the Far East, in South East Asia and in Western Asia, India has had trade and cultural relations for thousands of years, and it is inevitable that with freedom she should renew and develop these relations. Reasons of security and future trends of trade also demand these closer contacts with these regions. India, which has conducted her own struggle for freedom on a nonviolent basis, will always throw her weight on the side of world peace and cooperation. She will also champion the freedom of all other subject nations and peoples, for only on the basis of this freedom and the elimination of imperialism everywhere can world peace be established.

On the 8th of August 1942, the All-India Congress Committee passed a resolution, since then famous in India's history, and in this resolution it gave the battle-cry "Quit India". By that demand and challenge, the Congress stands today, and it has reaffirmed the national and international objectives of that August resolution. It is on the basis of this resolution and with this battle-cry that the Congress faces the elections for the Central and Provincial Assemblies.

The Central Legislative Assembly is a body with no power or authority and is practically an advisory body whose advice has been constantly flouted and ignored. It is completely out of date and is based on a very restricted franchise. The electoral registers for it are full of errors and omissions, and no opportunities for correcting or adding to them have been given. Large numbers of our countrymen are still in prison and many others who have been released are disqualified from standing for election. Obstructions in the way of holding public meetings still continue in many places. Yet, with all these and other handicaps and drawbacks, the Congress has decided to contest the elections to it on the issue of independence and 'Quit India'. In this election petty issues do not count, nor do individuals, nor sectarian cries—only one thing counts: the freedom and independence of our motherland, from which all other freedoms will flow to our people.

So the Congress appeals to the votes for the Central Assembly all over the country to support the Congress candidates in every way at the forthcoming elections, and to stand by the Congress at this critical juncture, which is so pregnant with future possibilities. Many a time the people of India have taken the pledge of independence; that pledge has yet to be redeemed, and the well-beloved cause for which it stands and which has summoned us so often, still

beckons to us. But the time is coming when we shall redeem it in full, not by the election but by what comes after it. Meanwhile, this election is a small test for us, a preparation for the greater things to come. Let all those who care and long for freedom and the independence of India meet this test with strength and confidence, and march together to the free India of our dreams.

15

Party Work[1]

For the last 25 years I have had close associations with the Congress organization. It was when I was the Secretary of the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee that I gained my first direct knowledge of the day-to-day problems of its organization. Later, when I became the General Secretary and then the President of the Congress my intimacy with the organization and its working grew closer and deeper. But during the last few years I have had no direct contact with the organization. I was, no doubt, regularly attending the A.I.C.C. sessions and the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee meetings, but there was no direct responsibility upon me. The result is that I am not fully aware of the details of the radical changes that have crept into our organization, though I am conscious enough of their general nature and trend. These changes have affected not only the Congress but also the nation at large. The impact of these changes has become increasingly obvious, specially since 1942. But I am sorry to say that many of our colleagues do not recognize these changes and continue to talk as before. They move in the same old way and are oblivious of the changing environments. The world has changed, but not they. As in religion, so in politics we are in danger of losing the vision of the whole in the narrowness of the dogma. Courage and enthusiasm we have in plenty, but what we need is the capacity to keep pace with changing India and the changing world.

For example, look at the wave of strikes in the country. Some of them are justifiable, others are not. We have, however, the habit of putting the blame on others and complaining that the Communists are instigating the labour to strike. But it is not enough to complain. We have to realize that throwing the blame upon others does not relieve us of our own responsibility in the matter. When we take up a certain cause then there is no room for complaining. Some of us even go to the extent of saying that the fault lies with the masses. It is unworthy to talk like that. If there is a fault, the fault must lie with us.

One thing is obvious to me, which is that the Congress has immensely grown in strength. This strength has grown in two ways, first by our increasing

[1] Speech at the meeting of the Provincial Congress Presidents and Secretaries held in New Delhi on 24 September 1946. *Congress Bulletin*, 16 October 1946, pp. 7–10 and A.I.C.C. File No. G-64/1946, pp. 84–8, NMML. Excerpts.

hold over the masses, and second by clearing the obstacles in our way. The only remaining hurdle in the field is the Muslim League and it is no doubt a major obstacle. Other oppositions are insignificant and hardly count. Nevertheless, although the Congress has gained in popularity, it is not yet able to direct the course of events in the country. Whether it is a strike or a riot, the Congress is unable to control it. This makes it obvious that the Congress organization has not yet adapted itself to the changed circumstances. It still moves in the old ruts.

You want to have a Congress office in every village. That is desirable. This question has been before us for 25 years. The real problem however is not of opening offices but of changing our outlook. You know that when we first came into the field, we had neither an office nor even a building of our own. We used to work in whatever shelter we could find. Today the Congress has its own buildings and offices. We had nothing of the sort. All we had was our faith and our enthusiasm. Enthusiasm as a rule does not last long, but surprising as it may seem, ours has endured. What I wish to emphasize is that despite its increase in strength, the Congress as yet has no correspondingly increased hold over the course of events in the country. I will not accept the excuse that we tried but could not succeed. For we claim to be revolutionaries, who will change the face of India. In the last resort we are responsible even for what the Muslim League does. If our work among the masses had been more comprehensive, we would have attained fuller success. On my release from jail last year I had declared my readiness to accept the responsibility for what happened after August 1942. If thousands have died in Calcutta it is a measure of our own weakness. If the villages are ravaged by dacoities, the ultimate responsibility is ours. Let us not throw the blame on others. *Jai Hind.*

16

Congress Objectives[1]

The Congress, meeting after six and a half years of war and upheaval and frightfulness, pays its homage to the memory of all those who have given their lives in the cause of India's freedom and all those who have suffered in the struggle for freedom and the emancipation of India's millions. During these years the World War raged in all its fury, and in India the armed might of an alien imperialist power tried to crush the spirit of freedom and the passionate desire of the Indian people to gain independence.

The Indian people resisted this ruthless onslaught and through travail and agony demonstrated their will to freedom. The complete failure and incompetence of an out-of-date political and administrative system resulted in famine which took its toll of millions of lives.

The end of the World War has not brought peace to the world and the appearance of the atom bomb as a weapon of war, with its frightful and horrible powers of destruction, has brought to a crisis the immoral and self-destructive elements of the present-day political, economic and spiritual structure of the world. Civilization is likely to destroy itself unless it gives up its imperialist and acquisitive tendencies and bases itself on the peaceful cooperation of free nations and on the maintenance of the dignity of man.

In India, as elsewhere, the period of transition from the old world, which has demonstrated its failure to the new, to which millions look with hope and for which they strive, is full of peril, and reactionary forces are everywhere trying to prevent the establishment of a new order of peace and freedom. This Congress has always stood for the full cooperation of free nations and for the removal of political and economic inequality between nations and peoples.

India has been and is today at the crux of the problem of freedom of subject peoples. On the complete emancipation of the Indian peoples depends the freedom of vast numbers of others in Asia, Africa and elsewhere. World peace and progress depend upon the solution of the Indian problem.

This Congress, therefore, reiterates its firm determination to continue the struggle for India's complete freedom till she becomes an independent nation

[1] This resolution was moved by Nehru at the Subjects Committee meeting at Meerut on 22 November 1946 and was passed unanimously. *Congress Bulletin,* 1 January 1947, pp. 14–15; also printed in *The Hindustan Times,* 23 November 1946.

cooperating with others on an equal basis for the establishment of peace, freedom and progress everywhere. India, by virtue of her past, her present position and her potential power, cannot accept a secondary position in the comity of nations.

For more than sixty years the National Congress has led the people of India towards this ideal and through struggle and constructive effort it has built up the strength of the Indian people. It has based itself on high ideals and endeavoured to put before the nation moral standards of conduct both on the individual and on the political plane because it was convinced that greatness of achievement comes to a nation only by keeping high objectives before it and by pursuing methods which are worthy of a great people. In these days of bitter and tragic internal conflict and a lowering of these ideals, this Congress reiterates its faith in the high destiny of India and the ideals which have moved the Indian people. Any weakness, complacency or straying from the straight path to freedom may well imperil the independence for which the people of India have struggled and which is now within their grasp.

The Congress, therefore, calls upon the people to put an end to internecine conflict and to face internal and external dangers as a united people in the spirit in which they have fought in the past for India's independence. That struggle has not ended and may yet require many sacrifices.

17

Strengthening the Party[1]

8 December 1949

My dear Rajen Babu,

As I look round the scene in India, I am alarmed and distressed at many developments that are taking place. I am not normally depressed for any length of time. But I cannot rid myself of the heavy responsibilities that fate and circumstance have thrust upon me. If anything goes wrong, in some measure at least, the responsibility for that must be borne by me as Prime Minister.

Of course, no individual can shoulder this responsibility by himself. During the past years this responsibility, so far as the Congress was concerned, was born chiefly by a limited number of persons. During Bapu's life, we all looked to him and if we could get his approval to any course of action, we felt assured and went ahead. Since his death, it has been much more difficult. But even so some of us, who form the old guard of the Congress, faced and shared this responsibility whatever the position or office we occupied. Practically speaking, and with no disrespect to others, the men who, in practice shouldered this burden were yourself, Rajaji, Maulana and Vallabhbhai. We functioned in somewhat different spheres of activity and did not have the opportunity to consult each other as often as we used to, but whether we wanted or not, we could not get rid of this burden. It came to us partly from our assumption of office but much more so from the position we had occupied for three decades in the Congress movement. So even if we resigned from any particular office, we could not escape from this responsibility. That was a charge laid upon us by the whole course of India's development and struggle of the past generation. The memory of Bapu demanded that we should carry on this work to the best of our ability. The confidence of the people also made us prisoners of our tasks. For whether we were criticized as a government or in any other capacity or not, the fact is that the public generally have looked up to us five persons much more than to anyone else in India.

What do we see around us now? I do not refer to the difficult economic situation that we have to face. That of course is important and urgent enough. But what distresses me even more is the cracking up, with great rapidity, of the noble structure that Bapu built. With all its failings, the Congress represented

[1] To Rajendra Prasad, JN Papers, NMML. Excerpts.

the spirit and mind of India and I do not see anything else that can take its place without disrupting the country and bringing chaos and suffering.

This Congress is simply fading away before our eyes. Even a fading might have been tolerated, but something worse is happening. There is no discipline left, no sense of common effort, no cooperation, no attempt at constructive effort (apart from a few), and our energies are concentrated in disruption and destruction.

I would not mind all this very much if I knew that some other fairly competent group could run the country for a while. It would do good to the Congress and to us individually to be free of the turmoils and responsibility of office and to devote ourselves to other kinds of work among the people. I am not afraid of losing the election. But I just do not see any other group which can run the country with even a moderate degree of success. The alternative to the Congress is thus nowhere to be seen, or at any rate any effective alternative. If the Congress goes out of the picture, the result is the growth of innumerable factions who fight each other regardless of the country's good. We shall then have separatisms in every form, provincialism, communalism apart from all kinds of splinter groups sailing under the name of socialism and communism. In addition to this, we shall have internal provincial conflicts which come in the way of every kind of effective work.

We all see what is happening in West Bengal and in East Punjab. That seems to me the precursor of what might happen in every part of India, with this difference that there will be no effective central authority, whether government or Congress, to exercise any degree of control. Politically, economically and socially we shall just go to pieces. No doubt, some time or other India will pull herself together again. How long that process will take, no man knows and meanwhile there will be terrible suffering for our people and reaction in its worst form will triumph. That is not pretty to look at or think about.

18

Aiming at A Welfare State[1]

What are our principal problems? Broadly speaking, they may be placed under three heads: international, economic policy, and communal. In regard to each of these three major aspects of our policy, the Congress has had a definite outlook and approach. Conditions have changed and a great deal has happened in the course of the last three or four years. Do these events necessitate a change in our policies and our general approach to public affairs or do we still adhere to those policies of the Congress on the basis of which we have been working for all these years?

The Congress approach to international affairs was stated in general terms. We have now to deal with them realistically in an explosive situation, full of dangerous possibilities, which changes from day to day. About a month ago I spoke in Parliament at some length on our foreign policy and we have endeavoured to follow the lines explained at that time. I shall not, therefore, repeat what was said on that occasion. India's burden and responsibility have grown and we have to make fateful decisions from time to time. These decisions should have the backing of a clear mandate from the Congress. I should like, therefore, the Congress to consider the broad lines of this policy which we have declared and pursued and to give its approval. That approval can only be in general terms, for it is not possible to lay down any detailed policy which fits in with a changing, dynamic situation.

Far the most important of our problems is that of economic policy, for on that depends the future of our country. We have, of course, not made great progress in this respect. Our opportunities were limited and we were always struggling against heavy odds. But, whatever the past may have been, we should be clear in our minds as to what our pattern for our future should be.

In following our ideals and giving effect to our policies, we have always to adapt ourselves to the facts of the situation, to our resources, both actual and potential, and to the many complicated factors, which are at play in the India of today. But while we so adapt ourselves, we have to keep our objective clear and our approach must be on the general lines laid down by the Congress. I am

[1] Statement to the Press, New Delhi, 12 September 1950. *National Herald,* 13 September 1950.

clearly of the opinion that we must aim at what has been given the name of the Welfare State. We cannot allow ourselves to be kept back or diverted from our aim because of vested interests, and must judge every step from the point of view of the good of the masses. Any realistic approach to this problem must be well-planned and this will naturally lead to a planned and more or less controlled economy. We have a high-powered Planning Commission, consisting of able, experienced and earnest men, at work. People have criticized it for not showing quick results, not appreciating the essence of planning and the complexity of the task. Our resources are limited and we cannot plan for something in the near future which we are not in a position to achieve. We should be idealists, but we have to be at the same time in touch with reality. We do not want violent upheavals or sudden changes in the whole structure of our economy, for these will inevitably bring about confusion and suffering in their train and delay our progress, instead of speeding it, for a long time to come.

The way is not easy and nothing can be done by a mere declaration or by some magical method. Only objective thinking and hard work will achieve results. This leads us inevitably, for the present, to a mixed economy which may be progressively changed, leading ultimately to a truly cooperative commonwealth. Whatever our policy, the basis of it is in increasing agricultural and industrial production, which will enable us not only to meet the needs of the present but also give us room for future expansion.

A prosperous peasantry has been a primary aim of the Congress. In order to attain this, the Congress laid down the policy of putting an end to the jagirdari and zamindari systems, and all intermediaries in land. This has to be given effect to as speedily as possible. While the land goes to the tiller, we aim at the growth of agricultural cooperatives, which will improve production and give economic freedom to our peasantry.

The third problem I have called communal, though that is much too limited a word. It applies chiefly to what has been called the Hindu-Muslim problem but it includes other religious minorities also. Congress has been opposed to the encouragement of a communal, parochial or other narrow outlook. It has fought communalism on all fronts. During the last thirty years of Congress history, perhaps there is no aspect of national affairs to which Congress has attached greater importance. This policy of the Congress has been accepted and declared by Parliament and has been embodied in our Constitution. But it is a patent fact that, ever since the partition, the spirit of communalism and a certain revivalism have been encouraged in India. Organizations which dared not preach them in earlier years now flaunt them in public and even challenge the very basis of our Constitution. What is still more distressing is the fact that this spirit of communalism and revivalism has gradually invaded the Congress, and sometimes even affects Government policy. The importance of this has been emphasized by the reactions of the communal and revivalist press

to the Congress Presidential election. We cannot shut our eyes to these dangerous symptoms.

It may be that this spread of the communal spirit in India is a reaction to the intense communalism of our neighbour country, Pakistan. This may be an explanation of what is happening in India, but is it any justification? In any event, is it wise to let it grow? I hold that this communal approach is bad for the progress of any country in the modern world. I am convinced that it will lead to grave injury to India, not only from the point of view of high ideals and old established policy, but also from any present-day practical test. . . .

We have, unfortunately, many conflicts and disputes with Pakistan as a legacy of the partition. I hope that we shall solve them, but whatever they may be they must be considered on the purely political level and without any intrusion of communalism.

We have repeatedly declared that ours is a secular state. Indeed no modern state which claims to be progressive can be anything but secular. The government of a country like India, with many religions that have secured great and devoted following for generations, can never function satisfactorily in the modern age except on a secular basis. If that is so, then this approach should govern all our activities and the state must encourage it in every way. Because of our disputes with Pakistan, I fear that we have often forgotten this and are being infected by the communal slogans and methods of Pakistan. That way lies danger.

We have to treat our minorities in exactly the same way as we treat the majority. Indeed, mere fair treatment is not enough; we have to make them feel that they are so treated. We want, quite rightly, Pakistan to do this and our complaint is that Pakistan has not done so. Whatever Pakistan may or may not do, it is our duty to function with the strictest impartiality as between various communal or religious groups in India and give them absolutely equal opportunities for progress. We have to make allowances for fear and suspicion and to remember that the responsibility for this lies always far more on the majority than on the minority.

In view of the prevailing confusion and the threat of false doctrine, it has become essential that the Congress should declare its policy in this matter in the clearest and most unambiguous terms.

There are, of course, many other matters of importance, such as the refugee problem. But that does not raise any question of policy, though opinions may differ as to how to deal with it. It is our duty and responsibility to rehabilitate these unhappy, displaced persons who have suffered so much and because of circumstances utterly beyond their control.

I think much of the evil that has crept into the Congress has been due to the lure of power and the prospect of elections to public bodies. Whenever a Congress election is held, whether it is in a district or a province or on an all-India scale, behind that election looms the shadow of the general elections to

come. It is supposed that those who will get into Congress committees now will form election-running and parliamentary boards, will choose candidates and will themselves have a chance of being so chosen. The result of this has been that the Congress organization has forgotten to do all its proper work and dreams only of the general elections and who should be nominated as a candidate. If we could have separated this election-running and parliamentary activity of the Congress from its basic work, much of the trouble we have had would not have occurred, and the deterioration that has taken place might have been avoided.

I think there is still time to take some steps about this matter. The work of selecting candidates for the general elections can be separated from the normal work of Congress committees. If this is done, I believe that, in spite of prevailing conditions, health may yet return to the Congress.

19

Setting the Standards[1]

The achievement of independence and the establishment of the Indian Republic concluded one phase of the Indian people's struggle for emancipation. The success of this phase of our struggle for freedom was unique in many respects. Under the leadership of Gandhiji the National Congress carried on this struggle and endeavoured to follow, to the best of its ability, the policy and methods which Gandhiji had laid down. In cooperation with vast number of men and women of our country, it was the high privilege of the Congress to serve the cause of the country and of the masses of our people and lead them to success. The Father of the Nation told us to value the moral and ethical basis of national life and made this the condition of political action. He emphasized that means were as important as ends and the means we adopt ultimately shape the ends which follow. In accordance with India's immemorial teaching and heritage, the performance of duty was given first place, and rights and privileges naturally flowed from them. The Congress and the people could only imperfectly follow this teaching, but the inspiration they drew from it benefited them and led them towards their goal. It is necessary for all of us to keep this in mind when conflict darkens the world, and dissensions and a lowering of standards threaten our public life. It is only by adhering to these first principles that real success can be achieved, and India can prosper and rise to her destined heights.

Even during our struggle for independence, its content was not merely political freedom, but also the freedom of the masses from exploitation and want. The provision of basic material needs of food, clothing and shelter was the first essential, to be followed by the provision for cultural growth. On the attainment of independence, exceedingly difficult problems confronted the nation and even threatened the newly-won freedom. During the last four years, these great problems of ensuring the freedom and the integrity of the country, of integrating the various parts into the Union of India, of attempting to rehabilitate millions of displaced persons, and of laying the foundations for future

[1] Election manifesto, prepared by Jawaharlal Nehru and presented at the session of the AICC, Bangalore, on 13 July 1951 and adopted on 14 July. The manifesto was again moved and adopted at the AICC meeting at New Delhi on 16 October 1951. File No. G-63 B/1951, AICC Papers, NMML. Excerpts.

growth have absorbed the mind and energy of the country. The last Great War put an end in many ways to the old world that we knew and posed entirely new problems; the partition of India left a bitter legacy behind. Our civil and military services had to be organized afresh and the very large foreign element in them replaced by Indians. India's relations with her neighbour country, Pakistan, have, in spite of our best efforts, continued to be abnormal and have raised, and are still raising, difficult problems.

Because of the multitude and complexity of the problems that the country has had to face since the achievement of independence, our economic progress has not been satisfactory. Millions in the country still lack sufficiency of food, clothing and shelter. The objectives of the Congress, which have been embodied in the Constitution of India, still remain, in a large measure, unrealized. The time has come for our struggle for emancipation to enter into its second phase of realizing those objectives, without which political freedom can have little meaning for most of us. Economic progress must therefore be given first priority, subject only to the maintenance of the freedom and integrity of the country.

The key to the character of the future economic and social organization of the country and its motive power is provided in the Congress constitution, which has as its objective the establishment in India, by peaceful and legitimate means, of a cooperative commonwealth based on equality of opportunity and of political, economic and social rights, and aiming at world peace and fellowship. Thus the objective as well as the method is one of cooperation and the avoidance, as far as possible, of competition and conflict. This conception of social organization inevitably leads to the secular state in which every individual has equal rights and opportunities, and the removal of barriers which may divide the people into opposing groups on the basis of religion, caste, class or region. The application of this principle in the national sphere would lead to social progress and peace and would strengthen the nation. Its extension to the international sphere leads to an independent foreign policy basing itself on the promotion of world peace.

The progress of a country with limited resources, such as India is at present, depends on the most effective utilization of such resources for the public good. This involves a planned approach to the various aspects of national life and activity. The Congress welcomes therefore the functioning of the Planning Commission and considers that the method of planned development is essential for progress and must be continued. But such planning, in order to be effective, must have full support and cooperation from the public. Planning must include all aspects of our national life so that progress may be uniform and might not be held up by some backward sector. In India today, stress must inevitably be laid on the progress of the rural areas and the people who live there.

Not only do they contain the vast majority of our population[2] and are the basis of our economy, but they have suffered neglect in the past and this must be made good so that they might have full opportunities for economic and cultural advance and to live the good life which is our aim. The first and vital step has been or is being taken to free the land from the burden of old and out-of-date agrarian systems of tenure. The abolition of zamindari, jagirdari and the like must be rapidly completed.

The burden on the land of too many people subsisting on it has to be reduced by the diversion of part of this population to other vocations. Some of these can be absorbed in large industries but, in the main, scope for absorption will come through small-scale and cottage industries. These cottage industries are particularly important in India and must be developed and protected with the aid of the state and coordinated with other forms of industry. But it must always be borne in mind that the best techniques should be employed for small-scale and cottage industries in order to make them effective and economic. For this purpose the state should encourage research. Cottage industries should be organized in industrial cooperatives, wherever possible. The handloom industry is our major cottage industry and deserves every help from Government. It has suffered from lack of yarn and because of this, many handloom weavers have been unemployed or only partly employed. Government should make special arrangements for the supply of adequate quantities of yarn to them.

It is not possible to pursue a policy of *laissez faire* in industry. This has been rejected in most countries and is peculiarly unsuited to present-day conditions in India. It is incompatible with any planning. It has long been the Congress policy that basic industries should be owned or controlled by the state. This policy holds and must be progressively given effect to. A state trading should be undertaken wherever the balance of advantage lies in favour of such a course. A large field for private enterprise is, however, left over. In this field the aim should be to develop cooperative enterprise on an increasing scale. Thus, our economy will have a public sector as well as a private sector. But the private sector must accept the objectives of the national plan and fit into it. The progressive extension of the public sector in the field of what is now the private sector must depend on various factors, including the results achieved, the resources available and the capacity of the country at the moment. The test should always be what serves the social ends in view. No vested interest or inherited privilege should be allowed to come in the way of the country's economic progress, nor should we allow ourselves to be distracted by slogans and doctrines which sound attractive, but which might lead to a worsening of the condition of our people. . . .

[2] Eighty-five per cent out of the total population of 356 million was rural.

Any all-round development of the country on a significant scale must strain its resources to the utmost, necessitating the need for much larger savings on the part of the community. In order to build a better future we must be prepared to suffer hardships in the present. The necessary sacrifice in consumption has to be spread as widely as possible, but those with higher incomes have special obligations to fulfil in this respect. Corporate savings should play an increasing role in capital formation. Steps have already been taken in several states to utilize the voluntary effort of the people for constructive purposes and these have met with considerable success.[3] A planned effort should be made to canalize, in an organized way, the unused time, skill and other resources of the people on a voluntary basis for the economic and social betterment of the community.

The achievement of economic equality and social justice must proceed side by side with economic progress. Thus alone can social peace and democracy be preserved. The post-war shift in relative prices has, to some extent, rectified the disparity between the rural and the urban sectors. The measures for economic development being undertaken by the state, particularly, the large irrigation and power projects and the programmes for agricultural improvement, will lead to a further levelling up of the standard of living of the masses, especially in the rural areas. Between the upper and the lower ranges to fixed incomes, the gap has been narrowed in terms of the standard of living. Much more remains to be done. Redirection of public expenditure in the interests of social welfare and the imposition of estate duties on succession should be fully availed of as a means for the removal of inequalities. The tax structure should be examined and other methods explored for bringing about a reasonable relationship between the minimum and the maximum incomes, both in the private and the public sector, in keeping with the economic conditions of the country. Inequalities have been accentuated during recent years largely in consequence of illegitimate gains from black marketing, tax evasion, certain forms of speculation and other anti-social activities. To give immediate relief to the people and to promote social justice, these evils should be curbed with a strong hand. There has been uneven economic development of irrigation, power, agriculture and industry. The claims of these regions should be given special consideration.

The concern of the state for safeguarding the rights and interests of labour has expressed itself in several advanced measures of legislation. There is, however, much room for improving the implementation of these laws. Housing for workers is of great importance and should be encouraged by the state to the best of its ability and resources, in cooperation with the employers and the workers. A rise in the standard of living of the workers is not only desirable in itself, but

[3] For example, self-help projects in Assam for construction of roads and bridges, cooperative societies of cane-growers in Bihar, and boards for construction of houses for industrial workers in Bombay had been undertaken.

leads to greater productivity. The per capita productivity in India, when compared to some other countries, is low. This may be due to a variety of causes which must be investigated. It must be borne in mind, however, that without higher productivity the interests of the nation as well as of the workers must suffer. The machinery and procedure relating to arbitration and adjudication of disputes should be so improved as to secure fair settlements, based on the principle of social justice and with the least expenditure of time and money. Legal technicalities, formalities and appeals should be reduced to the minimum. . . .

There has been frequent reference to corruption, and there is little doubt that various forms of corruption exist as social evils today. Every effort must be made to put an end to this evil and some form of summary method must be devised to deal with such cases. At present the real difficulty in dealing with these matters is due to the dilatoriness of procedure in departmental inquiries and judicial proceedings in the law courts, and the standard of proof required, which often leads to the guilty escaping punishment.

The importance of education and public health is well recognized and yet no marked advance can be made in them so long as our resources are limited. At the same time, it is necessary to direct education in the right channels and remove many of the evils from which it suffers today. Education should be looked upon as something which trains the intellect and builds the character of the student, and not merely as a means for employment. What the next generation will be depends upon the education given now and the importance of this cannot, therefore, be exaggerated. Our system of education should not be divorced from the productive and other needs of the community, but should be related to them and be conducive to their fulfilment. The principles of basic education, i.e., learning through a craft, should be utilized to the largest possible extent. Even in higher education, some form of manual work should form an essential part of the curriculum, without which degrees or diplomas should not be given. An essential part of education should be an appreciation of and devotion to truth and beauty in their various forms. Art and literature, music and drama, singing and dancing should be encouraged.

The women of India in the past, and especially in the struggle for the country's freedom, have played a notable part and distinguished themselves in many ways. They suffer, however, from a number of social and other disabilities. It is important that these disabilities should be removed so that they may take their full part in the economic and social progress of the country and make their special contribution to the life of the family and the community. In particular, they have to be intimately connected with all activities of social welfare and social education. Women are more responsible even than men for the next generation, and unless they are enabled to participate fully in all national activities, the progress of the nation suffers. The Congress is therefore of opinion

that every effort should be made to open out opportunities of service for them in the legislatures and in social activities. . . .

The world is distraught and moves from one crisis to another. India is affected by these world crises and cannot escape their consequences. We live in dangerous times and a false step may well prove perilous to us. India can only play an effective part in the cause of peace in this tormented world by adhering to her ideals and building up her strength as a united nation. Separatist and fissiparous tendencies weaken the nation and make it ineffective and, at the same time, come in the way of all progress. These difficult and precarious times demand a large unity of purpose and endeavour and cooperation in achieving the objectives we have placed before ourselves.

20

Weakening the Congress[1]

New Delhi, 9 August 1951

My dear Purushottamdas,

Thank you for your letter of August 9th which I received this evening.[2]

As I have already written to you. I have been giving a great deal of thought to this matter and considering all aspects of it. I do not think that I have been influenced particularly by individuals or what happened to them. What has troubled me were certain drifts in the Congress which, I think, are harmful both to the Congress and the country. I have believed, and I continue to believe, that it would be tragedy for the Congress to fade out or become unimportant. I have, therefore, been opposed all along to any attempts to weaken the Congress as such or for people to resign from it, even though they might have disapproved of much that was happening. From the same point of view I have been long distressed at the attitude of some persons which indicated that they wished to drive out others from the Congress who did not fit in with their views or their general outlook. . . .

This has distressed me greatly because I feel that the Congress is rapidly drifting away from its moorings and more and more the wrong kind of people, or rather people who have the wrong kind of ideas, are gaining influence in it. The public appeal of the Congress is getting less and less. It may, and probably will, win elections. But, in the process, it may also lose its soul.

Because of all this, I thought hard as to what I should do. I could not conceive myself to be a willing spectator of this gradual decay or even a passive and inert spectator of it. Naturally, I did not wish to do anything which itself would injure the Congress. That was the problem before me not only now, but for months past. Ultimately I came to the conclusion that I could serve the real

[1] To Purushottamdas Tandon. File No. G. 11/1951. AICC, NMML. Excerpts.

[2] Tandon wrote: "I am aware that our course has not been entirely smooth and some minor points of difference regarding the organizational set-up have arisen: but on matters of Congress policy I feel that there has been on the whole general unanimity and the Working Committee has functioned with great goodwill and successfully guided the Congress during the eventful period which has elapsed since the Nasik Congress."

objectives and ideals of the Congress better by being outside the Working Committee. That first step was quite clear to me. Subsequent steps were not so clear.

I am fully conscious of the consequences of the step I am taking and even the risks involved. But I think those risks have to be taken, for there is no other way out.

I have mentioned some wider considerations. Apart from these, or in addition to them, I have felt, as I have already written to you, completely out of tune in the Working Committee. I felt this very much in Bangalore.[3] I am convinced that I can be of no effective service in the Committee at this stage. I come in the way of others, and have a feeling that others come in my way.

When this is the position, I think we should be straight with ourselves and with the public. A frank approach ought at least to help in a fuller realization of the problems and difficulties before us.

I am more conscious than anyone else can be of the critical situation which the country has to face today. I have to deal with it from day-to-day. This situation itself has had a double reaction upon me and, in the balance, it has confirmed the decision I have arrived at.

There is no reason you should resign the Presidentship of the Congress.[4] This is not a personal matter.

[3] When Tandon became the President of the Congress, Nehru and Maulana Azad proposed Rafi Ahmed Kidwai for the Working Committee, which as a convention used to be constituted after informal discussions among the top leaders. However, Tandon refused to include Kidwai. At the Working Committee meeting in Bangalore in July 1951, Nehru demanded that the Committee as also the Central Election Committee be reconstituted to make them broad-based and representative. Tandon refused and offered to resign. Nehru, who initially declined to join the Working Committee because of Tandon's refusal, subsequently changed his mind.

[4] Tandon requested Nehru to attend the Working Committee meeting on 11 August when he would place his own resignation before it for consideration.

21

Choice of Candidates[1]

The future, not only of the Congress but of the country, depends upon the quality of persons elected to Parliament and to the State Assemblies. We can take no risks in this matter and we must not be swept away by party, group or like considerations. We must choose persons who can represent worthily Congress principles and ideals, who are men and women of proven integrity, and who have the ability to discharge the responsibilities of membership of the legislatures. I am quite sure that it is better for us to lose a few seats than to try to win them by compromising with any of the above principles and standards. If the public know that we are strictly following these principles, that will go a long way to raise our candidates in their estimation and will, of course, bring credit to the Congress.

I should like you, therefore, particularly to bear in mind the following factors:

(1) Candidates chosen by us should not only possess integrity, but be known to do so. We must not put forward any person who has not got such a reputation in the public mind. Thus, any person who has been connected with any anti-social practice, such as blackmarketing, etc., should not be selected. Any person whose past record is considered to be bad from the Congress point of view should not be selected, even though he might be considered locally to have chances of winning the election.

(2) The major struggle in India today, in the elections or elsewhere, is between the Congress, as representing a non-communal and secular state, and communal bodies which have an entirely different approach on this issue. These communal bodies often talk in terms of nationalism and sometimes even pretend to stand for social and economic progress. Essentially, however, they represent reaction in every way and they attract to themselves the socially reactionary groups and classes. They are likely to be financed by these classes. Their

[1] To Chairmen, Pradesh Election Committees, 19 September 1951, AICC Papers, NMML. Excerpts.

candidates, whatever they might say, represent every kind of reaction in India—political, economic and social. With the Socialist Party we have some differences, but there is also much in common. But there is almost nothing in common between the Congress approach and the communal approach. Therefore, Congress candidates must be chosen with particular care so that they might represent fully the non-communal character and approach of the Congress. Persons who have been connected with communal organizations should therefore be suspects from this point of view. This is important, as there has been a certain infiltration, in the past, of communal elements in the Congress.

(3) The Congress does not wish to exclude anyone who stands for its objectives and manifesto. But we should adopt as our candidates persons who have a progressive social outlook. A mere silent acceptance of the manifesto is not enough. Thus, persons representing large vested interests are seldom likely to have this social outlook. Sometimes they might even, directly or indirectly, represent particular vested interests. Care should therefore be taken not to put forward, as candidates, any persons who are likely to represent a reactionary economic policy.

(4) There has been a great deal of complaint in many states about the formation of groups and cliques within Congress, and a majority group pushing out, or making ineffective, a minority group. We have decided to pull together to the largest possible extent and therefore, in choosing candidates, we must not proceed on clique or group lines, but choose the best persons available. Indeed, we should make a special effort to have representatives from the minority groups who are in the Congress or who, having left it recently, may come back to it.

(5) It is obvious that a member of a legislature can only function effectively if he or she has a certain ability and capacity. It would be completely wrong to choose persons without that ability or capacity.

(6) In every state a list of persons should be made who, by virtue of their experience and ability, might be required to assume responsibility of government later on. A special effort should be made to get these persons elected. It would be unfortunate if our outstanding Congressmen, from the point of view of government and legislative work, are left out.

(7) The election to the Upper House at the Centre, namely, the Council of States, will take place much later, but it is necessary to keep that in view even when selecting candidates for the Lower House. In this way some persons might be reserved for the Upper House.

(8) It is not only a matter of honour for us, but something of great practical importance, that we put up representatives of the minority communities in adequate numbers. Separate electorates and reservations have been given up, and this has increased our responsibility in this respect. If we fail to discharge this responsibility, critics will be entitled to say that joint electorates have failed, and that we cannot adequately protect the interests of the minorities. The principal minority is the Muslim, and we have to make special efforts to put up good Muslim candidates, even taking the risks of the loss of a seat or two. We have also to remember the Sikhs, the Christians, the Parsees and the Anglo-Indians. Normally we should try to give them representation in accordance with their population. In selecting candidates for the minority communities, election committees should consult representatives of those communities who are Congressmen or nationalists. It may even be desirable to co-opt to the election committee for this purpose some representative of a particular minority community.

(9) I have often laid stress on women being made our candidates. I am told that suitable women candidates are rare. I am surprised to learn this, and I am inclined to think that this is a man-made reason. We must remember that there will be large numbers of women voters who would normally prefer a woman candidate. In any event, we should try to put up women candidates. I would suggest as a rough measure, that a woman might be set up from each district.

(10) It is not necessary that we should select only from those who have sent applications. We have reserved the right to invite people to stand. Indeed, some of our best Congressmen would and do hesitate to put forward their names. Election committees should think of such persons and directly invite them to stand, even though they have not sent in their applications.

These are some important matters which I should like you and your election committees to bear in mind. It is on this basis that the Central Election Committee will proceed and it is desirable that your approach should be the same. We should like to be satisfied about the quality of the candidates and we shall test your list, in so far as we can, in accordance with the standards set out above. The more your proposals conform to these standards the easier it will be to get them passed by the Central Committee. . . .

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

22

An Objective Appraisal[1]

New Delhi, 8 February 1952

Dear Comrade,

I have long been wanting to write to you about the impressions I have gathered during my extensive tours in India in connection with the general elections. As the tours proceeded, these impressions gathered in my mind and experience succeeded experience. The results of the elections added still further to my understanding of the Indian scene.

The Working Committee, which met recently, discussed briefly these elections and the forces that moulded them. These forces were there for a long time past, but they were covered up to a certain extent and were not so obvious. The elections removed the veil and forced us to attempt to make a true appraisal of the situation. I shall probably write to you more fully on this subject later. But I wish to indicate to you some matters which, I think, require urgent attention.

It is essential for us to make an objective and correct appraisal. We must not hesitate to see our own faults because, if we do so, that means that we hold on to them and do not profit by experience. All of us, and indeed the people of India as a whole, have had a tremendous experience during these elections. I think we might well congratulate ourselves on the great success of these elections. I am not referring to the results but rather to the organizational aspects and, more especially, to the way a hundred million of our people functioned. My regard and appreciation of our people has grown as a result of this experience. They have functioned with a measure of intelligence and discrimination, which is truly surprising. They have shown that, even though largely illiterate, they have a broad understanding of issues, if these are properly placed before them. Indeed, oddly enough the so-called illiterate voter has done probably better than many of the literates.

As I write this, the results of the elections are not fully known. But the general picture is sufficiently visible. We have had quite remarkable successes

[1] To Presidents of Pradesh Congress Committees. File No. G-8(ii)/1952, AICC Papers, NMML. Excerpts.

in some part of the country, and we have had quite remarkable reverses in other parts. Suddenly we have realized what we are up against.[2]

I think it would be true to say that the Congress organization, as such, has not usually played a satisfactory part in many states. I think that, on the whole, our central headquarters, i.e., the A.I.C.C. office, has functioned effectively. I cannot speak of all the Pradesh Congress Committees. But I know that some of them did not function effectively. A large number of districts also did not function properly. Where we have lost, this was at least partly due to the non-functioning of the Congress organization. Where we have won, this was not always due to the Congress organization. Indeed the Congress organization, as a whole, rather failed in this test. What succeeded was an ad hoc organization in constituencies which conducted the election campaign. This ad hoc organization often had persons unconnected with the local Congress Executive. People came to it and helped in the election because, for some reason or other, they sympathized with the general Congress position or were personally favourable to the candidate. Indeed I was amazed in some places to see the lack of any Congress organization or even of coordination between Congress candidates.

Our choice of candidates sometimes was not good. But that is a relatively small matter. It has importance, however, when the electorate is discriminating, as our electorate has shown itself to be. They do not vote for any candidate set up, even though they might generally approve of the party. Hence it becomes important to set up candidates who have a good reputation and who are locally known.

The important thing, however, was the almost utter lack of discipline, both among Congress candidates and among Congressmen. Numerous cases have come to my notice where a Congress candidate played a lone hand or even furtively supported some non-Congress candidate and came to terms with him. No organization can function or survive in this way.

The success that has come to us is a matter of good fortune. The defeats that have faced us are a just punishment. Let us not find excuses and blame others. The fault was ours.

Some things stand out:

(1) the need for discipline;
(2) the need for continuous personal contacts with the people;
(3) the need for hard work among and with the people;
(4) the need to make our people understand our problem and our difficulties; and
(5) the need to attract fresh blood and vital people to the Congress.

[2] Though the Congress party secured an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha, in the four states of Madras, Travancore-Cochin, Pepsu and Orissa the party was returned as the largest single party without an absolute majority.

We have to function in future as a compact political party with a well-defined economic programme. We can no longer carry on in a loose and inchoate way accepting anybody and everybody as a Congress member or candidate. Let us have a broad enough basis, but a Congressman must believe and act up to certain basic principles and policies. There must be a hallmark of a Congressman in regard to political and economic policies. In the old days we had certain distinguishing features. But, with the coming of independence, these have disappeared and many of us talk in a variety of languages and express a variety of opinions on important matters. Anybody can pose as a Congressman, whatever his views might be.

One good thing that has emerged from these elections is our straight fight and success against communalism. That success is significant and heartening. But it is by no means a complete success and we have to be wary about this. We have seen at last that we need not be afraid of communalism and we need not compromise with it as many Congressmen did for fear of consequences. Where we fight it in a straight and honest way, we win. Where we compromise with it, we lose.

While we have met the challenge of straightforward communalism with success, we have seen the growth of casteism with all its narrow-minded and painful consequences. This has to be fought against.

It is perfectly clear to me that the Congress, as it is organized today, is a very feeble instrument for carrying out national work, more especially among the people. It has won elections, but that has been due to many causes. It has been due to old tradition, past reputation and to the weakness of others. It has also been due to the hard work put in by a number of people during the elections, with earnestness and vigour. They brought something of the old spirit in this contest and it was heartening not only to see their work but also the immediate reactions of the people to it. . . .

One noticeable feature of the Congress organization in past years has been its lack of appeal to the youth of the country. The type of young man or woman, who came to us in the past as worker or volunteer, and carried out the message of the Congress with zeal and enthusiasm, has not been coming to our organization. We become progressively elderly men with elderly ways, interested in small committees and reluctant to go to the people. The great problem, therefore, before us is how to bring in the youth of the country to work for the Congress and the cause for which it stands. . . .

The elections have shown that money does not go very far, though undoubtedly it makes some difference. It is the men and women that count. We have, therefore, to get the right type of men and women as our colleagues and comrades and, above all, we have to set an example of ourselves of what should be done. Every candidate, whether he has been successful or not, must maintain close and continuous contact with his constituency. He must visit his voters

and speak to them from time to time on the problems that face us. It is necessary for us to give our workers talking points on these problems. I hope that the A.I.C.C. office will organize this. But each Pradesh Congress Committee must do likewise. We must treat our vast electorate in an intelligent way and pay them the tribute of intelligence and discrimination, which they have shown to a surprising extent.

On no account can faction and sectional groups in the Congress be tolerated in the future. We have to function as a disciplined army now with definite objectives and with continuous work to attain them.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

23

Threat of War[1]

The Congress views with deep concern and grave anxiety the ever-growing tension and the deepening crisis in the relations between the Great Powers who have aligned themselves in rival power blocs engaged in a cold war and poised to strike with their unprecedented armed might, ever mounting to greater dimensions and intensity, and threatening destruction to themselves and to the rest of the world.

While nations and governments are not seeking war and the people of the world, including those of the countries in the rival blocs, earnestly desire peace, the accumulation of and race in armaments continues. The campaign and the psychology of hatred and distrust, and the acceptance, as the basis of their policy by the Great Powers, and that preparation for large scale and total war alone can lead to peace or to the prevention of war, has resulted in grave, incalculable and present risk to world peace. This has also rendered the desires of the common people for peace not only ineffective, but has increasingly turned the minds of nations and peoples to the acceptance of war preparations as necessary and war itself as almost inevitable. Thus their thoughts and minds are oriented in the direction of war.

It is necessary that attempts should be made to bring about a change in the opposite direction, creating a climate of peace, and the Government and people of India should devote their unceasing endeavours to that end. Further, a change in the approach of nations and governments, to each other or as between groups of them, in the direction of reconciliation rather than conflict and balance of power grouping, is urgent and essential if the great objectives embodied in the Charter of the United Nations and its original purposes may be attained and war prevented.

To this end, greater interchange and freedom of intercourse between nations, particularly between those who now stand separated by the Cold War and by other conflicts, should be encouraged. Progressive and positive action to bring about a degree of disarmament, cessation of hostile propaganda and campaigns of hatred and suspicion are necessary. Definite initiatives should be

[1] Resolution drafted by Jawaharlal Nehru on 12 January for the Hyderabad Congress Session and passed on 18 January 1953. JN Papers, NMML.

taken to resolve at least some of the outstanding issues which stand deadlocked in world affairs, such as, for example, the broadening of the United Nations Organization by the admission of states whose applications have been pending for many years,, and the representation of China being regularized by the real Government of China taking its place in the United Nations. These are essential first steps of grave urgency.

The Congress recognizes the considerable achievements of the United Nations Organization in the social, economic and humanitarian fields, even though they fall far short, measured against the needs and distress of mankind on the one hand and the potentialities of the earth and the advance of human knowledge on the other.

The Congress recognizes that considerable advance has been made in the colonial field during the last few years towards the liberation of subject peoples and for their welfare and progress. This advance, however, is inadequate and existing forms of colonialism, inevitably accompanied by race hatred and mutual conflict, exploitation and international rivalry, are continuing. These are causes of war and human misery which should be ended.

The Congress records its appreciation of and support to the Government of India in pursuing steadfastly the policy of peace and international cooperation unhindered by setbacks, inducements and provocations, the policy of peaceful cooperation and on nonalignment with power blocs, and urges the Government to continue to pursue this course which alone enables it to make positive contribution towards international understanding and world peace. It records its appreciation of the peace efforts of the Government of India in regard to the Korean war on the basis of international law and non-partisanship, and urges the Government to continue its efforts to ensure peace in Asia and to contribute to world peace.

The people of India, with their rich heritage and traditions and their newly-won freedom, have in this time of world crisis a duty to the cause of world peace. That duty they will best discharge by ridding themselves and their national life of all complexes of fear, intolerance, distrust and hatred and by freeing themselves of economic dependence on others. By the performance of this duty they will not serve their own country but will also serve the large causes of the world.

24

Basic Congress Policy[1]

I look back on the record of the Congress, with its ups and downs, and its successes and failures. It is a proud record in spite of our failings. But such a record brings with it tremendous responsibility. Even today the responsibility of the Congress all over India is very great. The governments that the Congress runs are important. But behind the governments is public opinion, the opinion of millions of people. It is the function of the Congress to guide, mould and to be guided by this public opinion, to discipline it and help it to work in right channels. That is the real strength of the country and of the government. If any people in government imagine that they are above this public opinion or above the Congress, then they are greatly mistaken and the very foundations that they stand on might be swept away.

I have been convinced of the high importance of the Congress functioning today, carrying on its work of unifying and integrating India, laying stress on peaceful and cooperative methods, and carrying our people along the line of progress. We are not a sectarian body consisting of the elect. We are fellow-travellers with the people of India. That means sometimes that our pace may be a little slower than we would like it to be. It is easy for a group to lay down fine policies, but such policies should bear relation to the multitude of facts that surround and confront us. At the same time the need for rapid progress is evident. The greatest danger to India and to the Congress is a feeling of complacency that all is well. All is not well in the world or in India today.

. . . For any organization to be effective, it must have discipline and effective work to its credit. That discipline need not be the narrow discipline of a sect, but it has to be an effective discipline; otherwise, the organization becomes just a loose collection of human beings with no clear purpose or will to work. I have noticed with deep regret conflicts among Congressmen in some states. Where such conflicts occur, regardless of the merits of the question, there is narrow-mindedness and lack of vision, and sometimes there are group loyalties or caste considerations. Both have no place in a great movement, both are disruptive. Ours is a work of construction, not disruption.

[1] Circular to Presidents, Pradesh Congress Committees, 26 May 1954. JN Papers, NMML. Excerpts.

We have always to remember that our great country exhibits a wonderful variety not only in physical features and geography and climate, but also in human beings; their languages, customs, backgrounds and urges. We have to keep this broad picture in view and not seek to impose something on one part of the country which may not suit it and which may create a feeling of suppression. Freedom functions in a different way. While discipline is essential and a certain uniformity necessarily follows, the rich variety of India has always to be understood and maintained. Only in this way does disciplined freedom flourish. We are a vast community of free individuals joining together in great national tasks, restricting that individual freedom only when it comes up against the larger freedom that we cherish.

There are many religions in this country, several of hoary antiquity, each has an honoured place in this country and each must have a sensation of freedom. That is why the Congress has always been opposed to what we have called communalism which is the narrow and bigoted villager's outlook mixing with politics to the detriment of both religion and politics. In particular, the great majority of the people of India, who are Hindus, must always remember that the interest and the well-being of the minorities are their sacred trust. If they fail in that trust, then they injure not only the country, but themselves. They go against the past tradition of India and, more especially, that great tradition which Gandhiji has bequeathed to us. Therefore, we have to take particular care that in the various activities of the nation, whether it is in the working of government and its services or in our elections or in the organization of the Congress, the minorities have an adequate and respected place.

In particular, we must fight wholeheartedly against those narrow divisions which have grown up in our country in the name of caste, and which weaken the unity, solidarity and progress of the country. Gandhiji gave first place to the uplift of the Harijans. That is essential, but that is only a symbol for the equality of all our people and for the elimination of the pride and privilege of caste.

. . . Our basic questions are after all economic and the land question is the most important of all. We have gone a good way in the direction of putting an end to zamindaris, jagirdaris and the like. Yet, even this step has not been completed in some states. But that step itself is not the final step and others have to follow. Ultimately, as the Congress has often said, there should be no intermediaries, of any kind, between the state and the cultivator. Also, we move progressively towards limiting the extent of a holding. Any hard and fast rule is difficult to make because of the difference in conditions in various parts of the country. Also we have always to bear in mind that production must not suffer.

25

Disruptive Tendencies[1]

I am writing to you about a matter of grave importance which has troubled me greatly. This is the growing agitation in regard to the formation of new states or the dismemberment of old states or other changes in the present boundaries of our states. We know that there is considerable feeling in this matter and the question of linguistic states has been before us for many years. The Congress considered this matter repeatedly and passed a resolution at its Hyderabad session, which you will no doubt remember. This resolution laid stress, not only on the linguistic and cultural aspect of this problem, but on others also and, most of all, on the vital importance of nothing being done which might impair the unity and progress of India.

Subsequently, the Government of India appointed a high-powered commission, which is functioning now. The Congress Working Committee has issued directions to Congressmen as to how they should function in regard to this commission. They have been given the largest freedom to express their views individually or in groups. It has even been stated that the minority in a committee or party can express its views in opposition to those of a majority. There should be no greater freedom in this respect. But the Working Committee has made it perfectly clear that there must be no public agitation by Congressmen, and this question of the reorganization of states should be considered calmly and dispassionately.

I regret to find that these directions of the Committee have not been observed, as they should be, and some Congressmen have taken an aggressive part sometimes in these agitations.

This problem was originally largely confined to the south of India. Now, it appears that every part of India has caught this infection and all kinds of astonishing demands are being put forward and hotly contested. Many people seem to suffer from a passion for bigness. Naturally the bigness is at the expense of somebody else, and conflicts arise. In these conflicts charges and countercharges are brought and, sometimes, threats held out. One would imagine that independent and hostile countries were dealing with each other. People of one

[1] Circular to the Presidents, Pradesh Congress Committees, 7 July 1954. JN Papers, NMML.

state not only threaten the people of another state but also run them down and refer to them as if they were foreigners and intruders. The whole past history of our struggle for freedom and of the Congress movement is forgotten. Even our present constitution is ignored.

This is an impossible situation for Congressmen. It has been the pride and virtue of the Congress to have laboured for the unity of India and of the Indian people. We built up a mighty organization where no difference was made between men of different states or religions or class or caste. Have they fallen so low now that we should forget the main purpose and basis of the Congress and allow these disruptive tendencies to flourish? It is time that every Congressman pulled himself up and put this question to himself and to his colleagues.

We want the problem of the reorganization of states to be tackled calmly, dispassionately and with a view to furthering the unity and progress of India and the wishes of her people. That purpose will be negative if these acrimonious agitations, accompanied by threats and mutual condemnation, are carried on. Does anyone believe that he is furthering his own cause by acting in this manner? Speaking for myself, I react strongly against him. Any such cause, which requires violence and threats to support it, is likely to be weak.

In any event, I want to make it perfectly clear to all our Congress Committees and to our comrades in the Congress that this is a challenge to the very basis on which we stand. We are not opposed to a proper redistribution of states taking into consideration all the factors involved. Let us proceed about it, by all means. But we are entirely opposed to the manner in which this subject is being tackled in many places and to the agitations that are being built up around it, sometimes real and sometimes artificial. We are entirely opposed to anything that sets one Indian against another or one state against another or weakens the idea of India's unity.

26

Report to the All India Congress Committee[1]

Avadi, January 1955

Over fifty years ago, as a boy, I attended a session of the Congress. Over forty-two years, ago, I became a delegate to the Congress for the first time. Ever since then, I have been intimately connected with this great organization. About thirty years ago, I became General Secretary for the first time. Since then, I have repeatedly held the offices of General Secretary or President.

I have thus grown up with the Congress and shared in its wide fold the comradeship of innumerable persons. What I owe to the Congress, I can never repay, for the Congress has made me what I am and has given me opportunities of service such as are very rarely given to any individual. I look back with pride and thankfulness to these long years of my association with the Congress. That association has been, through the Congress, with the people of India. I have been blessed by the affection of our people and I have found that there is nothing more wonderful in the wide world than the love of the Indian people.

The long years of struggle and feverish activity, with repeated periods of enforced inactivity in prison, pass before me. During these years, I was a soldier in a great army of freedom and I shared my experiences with innumerable others. It was our high privilege to work for a great cause under a great leader, and though we failed him often, yet, even to the extent that we proved true to him, we were ennobled. The vision of freedom that we saw warmed us and lighted us up and made us better than we were. It was given to us not only to dream but to see the realization of our dreams. We saw great sons and daughters of India and drew our strength from them. Above all, two magnificent sons of India, Gandhiji and Rabindranath Tagore, showed us the right path and inspired us.

Success came to us, but not in the manner that we had envisaged, and with the joy it brought, there was sorrow and trouble also. Suddenly we were faced with mighty and unexpected problems.

[1] Ministry of Home Affairs, File No. KS-4/55, pp. 5–19. Excerpts.

For these seven and a half years we have struggled with these problems and the record of our struggles is the story of India during this dynamic period of our history. I cannot here deal with our successes or failures, for that will be a long story and it is known to all. But I think I am justified in saying that these seven and a half years have seen the growth of India to a remarkable degree and in many ways. Her prestige has risen high in the world and strong foundations have been laid for the progress of her people. That is due not merely to governmental activity but rather to the work of innumerable persons who have laboured to this end. Today there is a feeling throughout the country of self-reliance which comes from great tasks undertaken and fulfilled, and faith in the future destiny of our country and people.

I realize that we are very far indeed from the realization of our objective. There is a great deal of unemployment, both explicit and disguised. Our standards are low and we cannot provide even the necessaries of life to all our countrymen. But the progress we have already made and the strength we have developed fills us with hope for the future.

We inherited the great problems following partition, the old Princely States, relics of feudalism, and a backward and stagnating economy with its concomitants of poverty and unemployment. While many of us talked of economic development and even of socialism, we were governed by social attitudes and historical survivals which came in our way. Even the maintenance of the unity of India was not something to be taken for granted as disruptive forces were continually at work. Partition, the result of communalism, led to a growth of a narrow communal spirit amongst some of our people also, divisions, petrified by caste, came in the way of unity and social progress, a narrow provincial spirit prevented the emotional and psychological integration of India.

We succeeded, through the genius of a great leader and our old comrade Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, in bringing about the political integration of India by the merger of hundreds of the old Princely States. That was a surprising and magnificent achievement brought about peacefully and with the cooperation of all concerned. We took a big step towards land reform by putting an end to the big zamindari, jagirdari and talukdari estates which were relics of a feudal order. That too was done peacefully and cooperatively.

Nowhere else in the world, to my knowledge, have these great changes been brought about through peaceful and cooperative processes. It has been the genius of India to do so. Our freedom itself, as a result of Gandhiji's teachings and techniques of action, was achieved peacefully and brought friendship with our old adversary England. So also in the great steps that we have taken in regard to the Princely States and the land system. The recent movement of Bhoodan and Sampattidan started by Acharya Vinoba Bhave is typical of the old Indian spirit and approach. In regard to industry, we have moved towards a socialized

pattern of society without breaking with those who represented the older order. We have sought their help and cooperation and received it in some measure.

We have been criticized by some of our countrymen for moving slowly and not declaring boldly that we must have a revolutionary change immediately. But revolutionary changes have come to our country, in the political, the economic and the social spheres without the usual accompaniment of war, conflict and blood. Some people do not realize this because they cannot conceive of any great changes without bloodshed and, therefore, they seek ways of conflict and violence. Other countries have waded through blood towards their objectives. They have done so because of historical accidents and the compulsion of events. They have paid a very heavy price for them and have been pursued by trails of bitterness and conflict.

Those historical backgrounds and conditions are fortunately lacking in India and our development has been different and, what is more, we are making good. It is folly, therefore, to try to copy the undesirable features of other countries merely because they have sometimes been associated with good motives and right objectives.

The basic lesson that Mahatma Gandhi taught us was that means govern ends and that we should never adopt wrong means even for right ends. Perhaps many of the troubles of the world today are due to the fact that no importance is attached to means. I do believe in the fundamental rightness of the principle that Gandhiji laid before us, even though we may not always be able to live up to it. But, apart from ethical theory, even practical wisdom and self-interest in the widest sense have demonstrated the worth of following the path laid down for us by Gandhiji. We have done so in the international field to the best of our ability, and India has been, I believe, a healing influence in a world which is torn by discord and has been living on the brink of catastrophe. Incidentally, we have prospered by following this path and respect for India has grown in other countries. . . .

A significant instance of the success of our peaceful methods was the solution of the problem of the French possessions in India.[2] We were patient and, in spite of difficulties, we persevered and aimed at a negotiated settlement. Thus we gained the goodwill of the French Republic and attained our objective, at the same time retaining the friendship of the people of France.

I am mentioning these matters because they are basic to our conception of international as well as domestic policy. We must be clear about these in our minds. While our policy has necessarily to adapt itself to changing circumstances, it is based on this strong foundation which does not change. Because of that, there has been a certain continuity in our policy and it has brought good results

[2] Nehru persisted with peaceful negotiations for the liberation of foreign possessions in India. The negotiations with the French went on till 1954, when M. Mendes-France found an honourable way of handing over Pondicherry and other bits of French territory.

to us and has at the same time strengthened our people. It is important that there should be a full realization of the springs of our policy among our people so that we might not be led astray by momentary passion and prejudice into wrong action.

It is for this basic policy that the Congress has stood and I earnestly hope that it will adhere to it, whatever the future might hold. That policy means the development of India as a great cooperative commonwealth with equality of opportunity and social justice for all. It means equality for all classes and religions in India. India has many religions, but it is a secular state giving freedom to all religions to function and favouring none. Any narrow communalism or provincialism must, therefore, be repressed and the evil of caste rooted out.

At a moment when the countries of the world become increasingly intolerant towards each other, we have to remember that tolerance is not only a virtue but the only practical approach to the problems of today, whether national or international. Every other approach brings conflict and degradation. In the international field, this may be called coexistence and the application of the *Panch Shila*, the five principles which we have agreed to in common with some other countries. This coexistence is not merely an absence of war and conflict but a recognition that each country should live its own life and not interfere with others and should have a friendly approach to other countries, even though they differ from it in many ways. . . .

27

Congress and Socialism[1]

9 March 1955

Dear Comrade,

The Avadi Congress, however, was something more than the triumph of some individuals. It was an expression of the nation's will; it exhibited the dynamic character of the Congress and kept in tune with the people and their urges. A great organization, full of years and traditions, is apt to become static and to rest on its laurels. There was this dangerous tendency in the Congress and many of us were apt to become complacent. It is not easy for such a vast organization, rooted in past habits, to make a fresh move. It is still more difficult for an organization which has attained success to keep alive to change and growth. Oddly enough, nothing is more dangerous in a way than to succeed, for this leads one to think that work is over.

There is no end to the journey of a nation and, in so far as the Congress represents the nation, there can be no end to its journey. More particularly, in present-day conditions of India and the world, we have to keep alive, wide-awake and moving. We only completed one stage of our journey when we achieved independence. In effect, that was a preparation for the real march of the nation onward. The political stage, though it does not end, takes a secondary place. We have to face the bigger problem of social and economic advance.

In this matter, I would draw your particular attention to the resolution at the Avadi Congress stating that our objective was the "establishment of a socialistic pattern of society, where the principal means of production are under social ownership or control, production is progressively speeded up and there is equitable distribution of the national wealth". The fifth resolution, dealing with economic policy, goes into further details of the socialist economy that we aim at. . . .

Let it be fully realized by all that we are deadly serious about what we have said that it is up to the Congress now to redeem this pledge that we have taken in all its fullness. We shall do so, in our own way, and that is a peaceful way,

[1] Circular to Pradesh Congress Committees. Shri H.B. Upadhyaya Papers, File No. 126, NMML. Excerpts.

a cooperative way and a way which always tries to carry the people with us, including those who may be apprehensive or even hostile to begin with.

We realize, of course, that the interests of various groups in the country clash, that there are class conflicts, that the interest of a land-owner is not the same as the interest of his tenant, the interest of the owner of a factory is not the same as that of the workers there. We do not ignore this clash of interests because it is patently there and to ignore it would be to ignore reality. But, nevertheless, we do not encourage class conflicts, as some people do, but try to resolve them or, at any rate, to lessen them. That does not mean that we should weaken in any way in our resolve or tone down our objective. That objective must be kept absolutely clear and everything has to be judged from the yardstick of the good it does to the masses of our people, and how far it takes us in the direction of the pattern of society that we aim at. If vested interests come in the way, they have to be removed; but in doing so we pursue the friendly and cooperative way, because we mean ill to no one and because we realizes that ultimately the good of the individual or the group can only come fully when the whole nation and our three hundred and sixty million people advance.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

28

Fighting Elections[1]

Elections are near. I have no doubt every single type of trouble will be played up. Whatever it may be by our opponents, we shall have to face them. But how can we face them? Not surely by adopting an attitude of compromise on principles.

We must not try to get the sympathies of a group or some individuals merely because that may help us in our elections. Nothing is more fatal than that. Nothing can be more fatal to the Congress than to lose its soul. I am not prepared to say, quite frankly, that the soul of the Congress is bright and shining at the present moment. I don't think so. Nevertheless, we still possess a bit of it and that gives us some strength. The moment we lose that bit, we go to pieces completely. It is important, therefore, that we should not demean ourselves or lower ourselves in any way, merely for the sake of some election, either general or local.

We are, of course, going to fight these elections with all our strength and I am sure we shall win. But I really do not care very much if we win or lose. It is because I do not care whether we win or lose that I am much stronger and can fight better and hit hard and be aggressive. It is the mentality of fear that makes one defensive, that makes one compromise, that makes one give up this or that and speak in a low voice.

Our approach to this question should be a courageous approach, not an approach of fear. It should not be a defensive approach, not a compromising approach. It should be an approach which is fair and square. But you can take that approach only if you are clear about what you stand for and if you are convinced of the rightness of your position. If you yourself are in error or trying to gain the support of this or that undesirable group, merely for some local advantages, you cannot take up that brave attitude, because there is a chink in your armour.

I think I am more conscious than anyone can be of the difficulties which the Government has had to face, of the Government's failures and failings. But I do not face the Indian public with any shame or apology in regard to the work

[1] Address to the Congress party in Parliament, New Delhi, 5 January 1957. JN Papers, NMML. Excerpts.

of the Government or Parliament, in spite of my knowledge of our many failings. I want to approach them with the fullest strength, talking to them about our failings as well as our achievements, treating them as comrades and taking them into my confidence.

You may say that you must go and serve the masses, *seva karo, seva karo.* These words have become hackneyed. I do not like the conception of *seva.* I like the conception of cooperation; two together, helping one another, can, I believe, do things better than one alone. I do not mean that service is bad; it is good but may be a dangerous thing. For, the person who is doing this service has a superiority feeling and he conveys that feeling to others. And thereby the true relationship of two human beings, which should be one of cooperation, is somehow put aside and one becomes dependent on the other, and, becoming dependent, rather resents that dependence. These are psychological things. That is why I do not like this business of *seva karoing* and the like.

We must approach the Indian people absolutely frankly, without inhibitions, frankly confessing what we have not done, what we ought to have done and telling them what we have done, telling them about our difficulties in the future, telling them what they will have to do and how we cannot solve these problems without their cooperation. Do not merely go about bragging of our good deeds; confess the other things too, and discuss these matters with them with not only frankness, but so as to make them feel that you are treating them as equals in intelligence to you; they may not be equal in intelligence to you, but the mere fact of your approaching them as equals, externally, will bring you nearer to them. And having done that, having worked our hardest, whatever the results are, we accept.

We do not shout and tear our hair and weep aloud. Even if the results go against us, even if we lose an election or two, we are not going to vanish from India. Indeed, it may be a very good thing for those who lose elections. They may be pulled up from their complacency and other habits that we may have developed. Having said all this, of course, the fact remains that we are going to fight the elections with all our strength and aggressively and not defensively.

VI

Bapu

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1

And Then Gandhi Came . . .[1]

World War I ended at last, and the peace, instead of bringing us relief and progress, brought us repressive legislation and martial law in the Punjab. A bitter sense of humiliation and a passionate anger filled our people. All the unending talk of constitutional reform and Indianization of the services was a mockery and an insult when the manhood of our country was being crushed and the inexorable and continuous process of exploitation was deepening our poverty and sapping our vitality. We had become a derelict nation.

Yet what could we do, how change this vicious process? We seemed to be helpless in the grip of some all-powerful monster; our limbs were paralysed, our minds deadened. The peasantry were servile and fear-ridden; the industrial workers were no better. The middle classes, the intelligentsia, who might have been beacon-lights in the enveloping darkness, were themselves submerged in this all-pervading gloom. In some ways their condition was even more pitiful than that of the peasantry. Large numbers of them, *déclassé* intellectuals, cut off from the land and incapable of any kind of manual or technical work, joined the swelling army of the unemployed, and helpless, hopeless, sank ever deeper into the morass. A few successful lawyers or doctors or engineers or clerks made little difference to the mass. The peasant starved, yet centuries of an unequal struggle against his environment had taught him to endure, and even in poverty and starvation he had a certain calm dignity, a feeling of submission to an all-powerful fate. Not so the middle classes, more especially the new petty *bourgeoisie*, who had no such background. Incompletely developed and frustrated, they did not know where to look, for neither the old nor the new offered them any hope. There was no adjustment to social purpose, no satisfaction of doing something worthwhile, even though suffering came in its train. Custom-ridden, they were born old, yet they were without the old culture. Modern thought attracted them, but they lacked its inner content, the modern social and scientific consciousness. Some tried to cling tenaciously to the dead forms of the past, seeking relief from present misery in them. But there could be no relief there, for, as Tagore has said, we must not nourish in our being what is

[1] From *The Discovery of India*, pp. 357–9.

dead, for the dead is death-dealing. Others made themselves pale and ineffectual copies of the West. So, like derelicts, frantically seeking some foothold of security for body and mind and finding none, they floated aimlessly in the murky waters of Indian life.

What could we do? How could we pull India out of this quagmire of poverty and defeatism which sucked her in? Not for a few years of excitement and agony and suspense, but for long generations our people had offered their "blood and toil, tears and sweat". And this process had eaten its way deep into the body and soul of India, poisoning every aspect of our corporate life, like that fell disease which consumes the tissues of the lungs and kill slowly but inevitably. Sometimes we thought that some swifter and more obvious process, resembling cholera or the bubonic plague, would have been better; but that was a passing thought, for adventurism leads nowhere, and the quack treatment of deep-seated diseases does not yield results.

And then Gandhi came. He was like a powerful current of fresh air that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breaths; like a beam of light that pierced the darkness and removed the scales from our eyes; like a whirlwind that upset many things, but most of all the working of people's minds. He did not descend from the top; he seemed to emerge from the millions of India, speaking their language and incessantly drawing attention to them and their appalling condition. Get off the backs of these peasants and workers, he told us, all you who live by their exploitation; get rid of the system that produces this poverty and misery. Political freedom took new shape then and acquired a new content. Much that he said we only partially accepted or sometimes did not accept at all. But all this was secondary. The essence of his teaching was fearlessness and truth, and action allied to these, always keeping the welfare of the masses in view. The greatest gift for an individual or a nation, so we had been told in our ancient books, was *abhaya* (fearlessness), not merely bodily courage but the absence of fear from the mind. Janaka and Yajnavalka had said, at the dawn of our history, that it was the function of the leaders of a people to make them fearless. But the dominant impulse in India under British rule was that of fear—pervasive, oppressing, strangling fear; of the official class; fear of laws meant to suppress and of prison; fear of the landlord's agent; fear of the moneylender; fear of unemployment and starvation, which were always on the threshold. It was against this all-pervading fear that Gandhi's quiet and determined voice was raised: Be not afraid. Was it so simple as all that? Not quite. And yet fear builds its phantoms which are more fearsome than reality itself, and reality, when calmly analysed and its consequences willingly accepted, loses much of its terror.

So, suddenly, as it were, that black pall of fear was lifted from the people's shoulders, not wholly of course, but to an amazing degree. As fear is close companion to falsehood, so truth follows fearlessness. The Indian people did not

become much more truthful than they were, nor did they change their essential nature overnight; nevertheless a sea-change was visible as the need for falsehood and furtive behaviour lessened. It was a psychological change, almost as if some expert in psycho-analytical methods had probed deep into the patient's past, found out the origins of his complexes, exposed them to his view, and thus rid him of that burden.

There was that psychological reaction also, a feeling of shame at our long submission to an alien rule that had degraded and humiliated us, and a desire to submit no longer whatever the consequences might be.

We did not grow much more truthful perhaps than we had been previously, but Gandhi was always there as a symbol of uncompromising truth to pull us up and shame us into truth. What is truth? I do not know for certain, and perhaps our truths are relative and absolute truth is beyond us. Different persons may and do take different views of truth, and each individual is powerfully influenced by his own background, training, and impulses. So also Gandhi. But truth is at least for an individual what he himself feels and knows to be true. According to this definition I do not know of any person who holds to the truth as Gandhi does. That is a dangerous quality in a politician, for he speaks out his mind and even lets the public see its changing phases.

Gandhi influenced millions of people in India in varying degrees. Some changed the whole texture of their lives, others were only partly affected, or the effect wore off; and yet not quite, for some part of it could not be wholly shaken off. Different people reacted differently and each will give his own answer to this question.

2

Aftermath of Madras Congress[1]

Allahabad, 11 January 1928

My dear Bapuji,

I am loth to inflict another letter on you so soon after my last but I am very much troubled by your criticism of the Congress resolutions[2] and I feel I must write to you again. You are always very careful with your words and your language is studiously restrained. It amazes me all the more to find you using language which appears to me wholly unjustified. You have condemned in general language the proceedings of the Subjects Committee and specially selected some resolutions for greater criticism and condemnation. May I point out that it is always unsafe to judge on hearsay evidence? You were not present yourself and it is quite conceivable that the opinions you may have formed after a personal visit to the Subjects Committee may have been different. Yet you have chosen to condemn and judge unfavourably the whole committee, or at any rate a great majority of it, simply basing your judgement on the impressions of a few persons. Do you think this is quite fair to the committee or the Congress? You have referred to discipline and to the Working Committee as the National Cabinet. May I remind you that you are a member of the Working Committee and it is an extraordinary thing for a member, on the morrow of the Congress, to criticize and run down the Congress and its principal resolutions? There has been a general chorus of congratulations on the success of the Madras Congress. This may be wrong or without sufficient basis but undoubtedly there was this general impression in the country and atmosphere counts for a great deal in all public work. And now most people who thought so feel a bit dazed at your criticism and wonder if their previous enthusiasm was not overdone or mistaken.

You have described the independence resolution as "hastily conceived and thoughtlessly passed." I have already pointed out to you how the country has discussed and considered this question for years past and how I have personally thought over it, discussed it, spoken about it in meetings, written about it and generally been full of it for the last five years or more. It seems to me that under the circumstances no stretch of language can justify the use of the words "hastily

[1] To Mahatma Gandhi, Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya, Serial No. 13039. SWJN, Vol. 3, pp. 10–15. Excerpts.

[2] Article in *Young India*, 12 January 1928.

conceived". As for "thoughtlessly passed", I wonder if you know that the resolution was discussed in the Subjects Committee for about three hours and more than a dozen speeches for and against were made. Ultimately as you know it was passed almost unanimously both in the committee and the open Congress. Were all the people in the committee and the Congress who voted for it "thoughtless"? Is this not rather a strange assumption? And why should it not be said with greater truth that the small minority opposed to the resolution were mistaken? You mention that last year the resolution was rejected by the committee. I do not know what inference you draw from this but to me it seems obvious that this can only mean that the committee and the Congress have been eager to pass it in the past as in the present but refrained from doing so out of regard for you. I hope you will agree with me that it is not healthy politics for any organization to subordinate its own definite opinion on a public issue out of personal regard only.

I am not referring here to the merits of the resolution. But I shall only say this that after prolonged and careful thought a demand for independence and all that this implies has come to mean a very great deal for me and I attach more importance to it than to almost anything else. . . .

I am sure most liberals welcome the independence resolution, whatever they may say about it, as they feel that it strengthens their position. But whether they like it or not, it passes my comprehension how a national organization can have as its ideal and goal Dominion Status. The very idea suffocates and strangles me.

I took no special interest in the resolution on the boycott of British goods chiefly because I felt that it would meet with your strong disapproval and the boycott could not succeed unless a more or less unanimous effort was made. But I have no doubt that it can be made into a partial success if there was some unanimity in our own ranks. You must have read about the wonderful effectiveness of the boycott in China. There was nothing special in China which we have not got and there is no fundamental reason why we cannot succeed where they succeeded. But gathering that it is not likely to succeed, is it such a laughing matter after all? Has our boycott of foreign cloth by khaddar succeeded so remarkably—has our spinning franchise succeeded? They have not but you did not hesitate to press them on the country and the Congress because you felt, and rightly, that they would be good for this nation even if they did not wholly succeed.

I remember how Kelker,[3] Aney[4] & Co., even as members of the Working Committee, used to make fun of the Congress resolutions on khadi, and it is very painful for me to think that you are also ridiculing important Congress

[3] N.C. Kelker (1872–1947); editor of the Mahratta, 1896–1918; he became a responsivist later.

[4] M.S. Aney (1880–1968); acting President Indian National Congress 1933; Governor of Bihar 1948–52; Member, Lok Sabha, 1959–67.

resolutions. The Kelkars & Aneys do not count and I do not care what they say or do. But I do care very much for what you say and do.

Having singled out two resolutions for your special condemnation you casually refer to the others as "several irresponsible resolutions". Excepting the Unity resolution every other resolution of the Congress may come under this heading. And so the labours of the 200 and odd persons in the Subjects Committee and the larger numbers in the Congress are summarily and rather contemptuously disposed of. It is very hard luck on the unhappy persons who, though wanting perhaps in foresight and intelligence, did not spare themselves and tried to do their best. We have all "sunk to the level of the school boys' debating society" and you chastize us like an angry school master, but a school master who will not guide us or give us lessons but will only point out from time to time the error of our ways. Personally I very much wish that we were more like real school boys, with the life and energy and daring of school boys, and a little less like the right honourable gentlemen who are forever weighing the pros and cons and counting the cost.

You know how intensely I have admired you and believed in you as a leader who can lead this country to victory and freedom. I have done so in spite of the fact that I hardly agreed with anything that some of your previous publications—*Indian Home Rule*,[5] etc.—contained. I felt and feel that you were and are infinitely greater than your little books. Above everything I admire action and daring and courage and I found them all in you in a superlative degree. And I felt instinctively that however much I may disagree with you, your great personality and your possession of these qualities would carry us to our goal. During the noncooperation period you were supreme; you were in your element and automatically you took the right step. But since you came out of prison something seems to have gone wrong and you have been very obviously ill at ease. You will remember how within a few months or even weeks you repeatedly changed your attitude—the Juhu statements,[6] the A.I.C.C. meeting at Ahmedabad and after etc.—and most of us were left in utter bewilderment. That bewilderment has continued since then. I have asked you many times what you expected to do in the future and your answers have been far from satisfying. All you have said has been that within a year or 18 months you expected the khadi movement to spread rapidly and in a geometric ratio and then some direct action in the political field might be indulged in—several

[5] *Hind Swaraj* or Indian Home Rule, written in Gujarati in 1909 during Mahatma Gandhi's return journey to South Africa from England, was a severe condemnation of western civilization.

[6] Mahatma Gandhi was against Council entry, but, under the influence of Motilal Nehru and Chittaranjan Das, who met him at Juhu after his release in February 1924, agreed to a compromise that those who did not believe in the boycott could contest the election.

years and 18 months have passed since then and the miracle has not happened. It was difficult to believe that it would happen but faith in your amazing capacity to bring off the improbable kept us in an expectant mood. But such faith for an irreligious person like me is a poor reed to rely on and I am beginning to think if we are to wait for freedom till khadi becomes universal in India we shall have to wait till the Greek Kalends. Khadi will grow slowly, and if war comes it will grow very fast, but I do not see how freedom is coming in its train. As I mentioned before to you our khadi work is almost wholly divorced from politics and our khadi workers are developing a mentality which does not concern itself with anything outside their limited sphere of work. This may be good for the work they do, but little can be expected from them in the political field.

What then can be done? You say nothing. You only criticize and no helpful lead comes from you. You tell us that if the country will not even take to khadi how can we expect it to do anything more difficult or daring. I do not think the reasoning is correct. If the country does not go ahead politically by one method, surely it is up to our leaders to think of other or additional methods.

Reading many of your articles in *Young India*—your autobiography, etc.—I have often felt how very different my ideals were from yours. And I have felt that you were very hasty in your judgements, or rather having arrived at certain conclusions you were over-eager to justify them by any scrap of evidence you might get. I remember how in an article on the "Two Ways"—or some such title—you gave some newspaper cuttings from America about crime and immorality and contrasted American civilization with India. I felt it was something like Katherine Mayo drawing conclusions from some unsavoury hospital statistics. Your long series of articles[7] based on the French book—*Towards Moral Bankruptcy*—also made one feel the same way. You misjudge greatly, I think, the civilization of the West and attach too great an importance to its many failings. You have stated somewhere that India has nothing to learn from the West and that she has reached a pinnacle of wisdom in the past. I entirely disagree with this viewpoint and I neither think that the so called *Rama Raj* was very good in the past, nor do I want it back. I think the western or rather industrial civilization is bound to conquer India, maybe with many changes and adaptations, but nonetheless in the main based on industrialism. You have criticized strongly the many obvious defects of industrialism and hardly paid any attention to its merits. Everybody knows these defects and all the utopias and social theories are meant to remove them. It is the opinion of most thinkers in the West that these defects are not due to industrialism as such but to the

[7] A series of 8 articles written by Mahatma Gandhi in *Young India* from 1 July to 19 August 1926, based on M. Paul Bureau's *D'Indiscipline des moeurs,* condemning the use of contraceptives.

capitalist system which is based on exploitation of others. I believe you have stated that in your opinion there is no necessary conflict between Capital and Labour. I think that under the capitalist system this conflict is unavoidable.

You have advocated very eloquently and forcefully the claims of *daridra-narayana*—the poor in India. I do believe that the remedy you have suggested is very helpful to them and if adopted by them in large numbers will relieve to some extent their misery. But I doubt very much if the fundamental causes of poverty are touched by it. You do not say a word against the semi-feudal zamindari system which prevails in a great part of India or against the capitalist exploitation of both the workers and the consumers.

Yours affly.,
Jawaharlal

3

Disagreement[1]

Allahabad, 23 January 1928

My dear Bapuji,

Your letter[2] came as a bit of a shock and was painful reading. Painful because with relentless logic you had contemplated certain eventualities which I had not considered possible or even thought of in their entirety. You talk about my carrying on "open warfare" against you and of "unfurling my banner". I have no particular banner to unfurl nor had I thought of the possibility of any warfare between you and me. I had certainly thought of differences of opinion, which may be fundamental, and of my following a line of action in regard to certain matters which may not meet with your approval. But I felt that you would certainly desire me to follow that line, even though you disagreed with it, if you thought that I was quite clear about it in my own mind. And even if there were possibilities of conflict on some points, there appeared to me absolutely no necessity for this difference or conflict to spread to the many other points on which I presumed there would be considerable ground for common action. You have referred to Sastri[3] and your relations[4] with him. Is any assurance from me necessary that nothing that can ever happen can alter or lessen

[1] To Mahatma Gandhi, Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya, Serial No. 13040. SWJN, Vol. 3, pp. 18–19. Excerpts.

[2] In his letter of 17 January 1928 Mahatma Gandhi had written: "I give you all the freedom you may need from the humble, unquestioning allegiance that you have given me for all these years. . . . I see quite clearly that you must carry on open warfare against me and my views. For if I am wrong I am evidently doing irreparable harm to the country and it is your duty after having known it to rise in revolt against me . . . The differences between you and me appear to me to be so vast and radical that there seems to be no meeting ground between us. I can't conceal from you my grief that I should lose a comrade so valiant, so faithful, so able and honest as you have always been; but in serving a cause, comradeship has got to be sacrificed. I suggest a dignified way of unfurling your banner; write to me a letter for publication showing your differences. I will print it in *Young India* and write a brief reply."

[3] V.S. Srinivasa Sastri.

[4] "To take Sastri for instance, he and I differ in . . . political outlook as poles asunder, but the bond between him and me that sprung up before we knew the political differences has persisted and survived the fiery ordeal it had to go through."

my deep regard and affection for you? That regard and affection is certainly personal, but it is something more. No one has moved me and inspired me more than you and I can never forget your exceeding kindness to me. There can be no question of our personal relations suffering. But even in the wider sphere am I not your child in politics, though perhaps a truant and errant child?

I should very much like to discuss many things with you and I cannot say whether I shall or shall not change many of my present opinions after my discussion with you. I hope I am not rigid in mind and outlook and nothing could please me more than to be convinced by you. I have wanted to have a good talk with you frequently in times past but you are always so busy and although I saw you often enough before I went to Europe I never had the opportunity I desired. I shall try to come to you as early as possible. Before I do so I shall write to you again and somewhat more fully some of the conclusions I have arrived at after some thought. I do not want to trouble you, specially in your present state of health, with long letters. But I think that if I write to you about my present views it would clarify matters and save time when we discuss them.

I do not quite appreciate your suggestion to publish my previous letter and to comment on it. Should you wish it of course you can do so. But it was an entirely personal letter and I do not see why the public should concern itself with it. Perhaps you may have been led to think that I am going to start some kind of a campaign against your ideas and it was desirable that before doing so some kind of statement should be issued. I have no such intention and if I criticize anything or defend anything against your wishes it will be done incidentally only. May I however warn you against believing everything that appears in the papers. The other day I spoke at Benares at a public meeting. I spoke in Hindi and my speech was wholly distorted in the English report and I was made to say something which I had never thought of. This was commented upon by the *Tribune* of Lahore, and may be other papers and it was made out that I was attacking you. This was a monstrous notion as I had not referred to you or thought of you in that connection. I have sent a contradiction. There is danger of this happening and I would beg of you not to believe such reports and to give me credit for greater sense and courtesy.

I would therefore suggest that for the present at least you might not publish my letter. But it is for you to judge and if you think it necessary you can publish extracts from it.

Your affly.,
Jawaharlal

4

On Gandhi's Leadership[1]

Sir,—Some days ago you published in the columns of *The Leader* a report of a speech I delivered at a public meeting in Benares. This report was wrong and misleading, but I did not think it necessary to trouble you with a correction or contradiction. But I find now that at least one newspaper of northern India has commented on it and drawn all manner of inferences which were not justified by what I actually said. I crave your courtesy therefore for these few lines in order to remove any misapprehension that might exist.

My speech was in Hindi, the report is in English. The report refers to 'effete and fossilized' people. My knowledge of Hindi is not sufficient to include any word for fossilized. What I wish to say was that we must develop the spirit of youth and not become unchanging embodiments of age. I laid stress on the fact that this spirit was sometimes to be found more in our elder men than in our youth, many of whom seemed to be born old. An extraordinary inference has been drawn that I was criticizing Mahatma Gandhi. This is a monstrous notion. No person who has had a glimpse of him even once, much less one who has had the high privilege of working with him and under him for many years, can call him old in spirit. He is the supreme example of latter day India, of all that is good in youth—energy and action, courage and daring, perseverance and resolution. . . . And if India and any Indian today possesses, in a small measure, any of these qualities it is largely due to his splendid example. We who talk of youth and the call of youth are pigmies before his giant and irrepressible youth.

Yours truly,
Jawaharlal Nehru

[1] Letter to the Editor, Allahabad, 21 January 1928. *The Leader*, 25 January 1928.

5

Negotiating in Britain[1]

Jhang, Punjab, 27 September 1931

My dear Bapu,

I grow impatient, you will think. You have hardly been in England a fortnight and I complain of you not having got the British Government and others to agree to discuss vital matters of principle. I am sure you are right and I am wrong. But when I read of the same old crowd repeating the same old pet phrases about the communal problem and you putting up with this inanity, I marvel at your patience. How wonderful you are to argue and argue and yet again argue with this motley crowd. I wonder if any purgatory would be more dreadful for me than to carry on in this way. If I had to listen to my dear friend Mohammad Ali Jinnah talking the most unmitigated nonsense about his 14 points[2] for any length of time, I would have to consider the desirability of retiring to the South Sea Islands, where there would be some hope of meeting with some people who were intelligent enough or ignorant enough not to talk of the 14 points.

It is a month today since the fateful decision was taken at Simla and you rushed across India to sail for foreign hands. Four weeks you have been away and it seems so long.

Yours affly.
Jawaharlal

[1] To Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya, Serial No. 17863. Excerpts.

[2] Jinnah formulated his demands in 14 points, the important ones being: a federal constitution with residuary powers vested in the provinces, separate electorates with a third of the seats in the Central Legislature reserved for Muslims, reforms in the N.W.F.P. and Baluchistan, creation of Sind as a separate province, and no bill or resolution to be passed in an elected body if three-fourths of the representatives of any community opposed it.

6

The Great Peasant[1]

Gandhiji's conception of democracy is definitely a metaphysical one. It has nothing to do with numbers or majority or representation in the ordinary sense. It is based on service and sacrifice, and it uses moral pressure. In a recent statement,[2] he defines a democrat. He claims to be "a born democrat". "I make that claim, if complete identification with the poorest of mankind, longing to live no better than they, and a corresponding conscious effort to approach that level to the best of one's ability, can entitle one to make it." . . .

Whether Gandhiji is a democrat or not, he does represent the peasant masses of India; he is the quintessence of the conscious and subconscious will of those millions. It is perhaps something more than representation; for he is the idealized personification of those vast millions. Of course, he is not the average peasant. A man of the keenest intellect, of fine feeling and good taste, wide vision; very human, and yet essentially the ascetic who has suppressed his passions and emotions, sublimated them and directed them in spiritual channels; a tremendous personality, drawing people to himself like a magnet, and calling out fierce loyalties and attachments—all this so utterly unlike and beyond a peasant. And yet withal he is the great peasant, with a peasant's outlook on affairs, and with a peasant's blindness to some aspects of life. But India is peasant India, and so he knows his India well and reacts to her lightest tremors, and gauges a situation accurately and almost instinctively, and has a knack of acting at the psychological moment.

What a problem and a puzzle he has been not only to the British Government but to his own people and his closest associates! Perhaps in every other country he would be out of place today, but India still seems to understand, or at least appreciate, the prophetic-religious type of man, talking of sin and salvation and nonviolence. Indian mythology is full of stories of great ascetics, who, by the rigour of their sacrifices and self-imposed penance, built up a "mountain of merit" which threatened the dominion of some of the lesser gods and upset the established order. These myths have often come to my mind when I have watched the amazing energy and inner power of Gandhiji, coming

[1] From *An Autobiography* , pp. 252–5.

[2] Dated 17 September 1934.

out of some inexhaustible spiritual reservoir. He was obviously not of the world's ordinary coinage; he was minted of a different and rare variety, and often the unknown stared at us through his eyes.

India, even urban India, even the new industrial India, had the impress of the peasant upon her, and it was natural enough for her to make this son of hers, so like her and yet so unlike, an idol and a beloved leader. He revived ancient and half-forgotten memories, and gave her glimpses of her own soul. Crushed in the dark misery of the present, she had tried to find relief in helpless muttering and in vague dreams of the past and the future, but he came and gave hope to her mind and strength to her much-battered body, and the future became an alluring vision. Two-faced like Janus, she looked both backwards into the past and forward into the future, and tried to combine the two.

Many of us had cut adrift from this peasant outlook, and the old ways of thought and custom and religion had become alien to us. We called ourselves moderns, and thought in terms of "progress", and industrialization and a higher standard of living and collectivization. We considered the peasant's viewpoint reactionary, and some, and a growing number, looked with favour towards socialism and communism. How came we to associate ourselves with Gandhiji politically, and to become, in many instances, his devoted followers? The question is hard to answer, and to one who does not know Gandhiji, no answer is likely to satisfy. Personality is an indefinable thing, a strange force that has power over the souls of men, and he possesses this in ample measure, and to all who come to him he often appears in a different aspect. He attracted people, but it was ultimately intellectual conviction that brought them to him and kept them there. They did not agree with his philosophy of life, or even with many of his ideals. Often they did not understand him. But the action that he proposed was something tangible which could be understood and appreciated intellectually. Any action would have been welcome after the long tradition of inaction which our spineless politics had nurtured; brave and effective action with an ethical halo about it had an irresistible appeal, both to the intellect and the emotions. Step by step he convinced us of the rightness of the action, and we went with him, although we did not accept his philosophy. To divorce action from the thought underlying it was not perhaps a proper procedure and was bound to lead to mental conflict and trouble later. Vaguely we hoped that Gandhiji, being essentially a man of action and very sensitive to changing conditions, would advance along the line that seemed to us to be right. And in any event the road he was following was the right one thus far, and if the future meant a parting it would be folly to anticipate it.

All this shows that we were by no means clear or certain in our minds. Always we had the feeling that while we might be more logical, Gandhiji knew India far better than we did, and a man who could command such tremendous devotion and loyalty must have something in him that corresponded to the

needs and aspirations of the masses. If we could convince him, we felt that we could also convert these masses. And it seemed possible to convince him for, in spite of his peasant outlook, he was the born rebel, a revolutionary out for big changes, whom no fear of consequences could stop.

How he disciplined our lazy and demoralized people and made them work—not by force or any material inducement, but by a gentle look and a soft word and, above all, by personal example!

7

Gandhi, Nehru and Religion[1]

Our peaceful and monotonous routine in gaol was suddenly upset in the middle of September 1932 by a bombshell. News came that Gandhiji had decided to "fast unto death" in disapproval of the separate electorates given by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's Communal Award to the Depressed Classes. What a capacity he had to give shocks to people! Suddenly all manner of ideas rushed into my head; all kinds of possibilities and contingencies rose up before me and upset my equilibrium completely. For two days I was in darkness with no light to show the way out, my heart sinking when I thought of some results of Gandhiji's action. The personal aspect was powerful enough, and I thought with anguish that I might not see him again. It was over a year ago that I had seen him last on board ship on the way to England. Was that going to be my last sight of him?

And then I felt annoyed with him for choosing a side-issue for his final sacrifice—just a question of electorate. What would be the result on our freedom movement? Would not the larger issues fade into the background, for the time being at least? And if he attained his immediate object and got a joint electorate for the Depressed Classes, would not that result in a reaction and a feeling that something has been achieved and nothing more need be done for a while? And was not his action a recognition, and in part an acceptance, of the Communal Award and the general scheme of things as sponsored by the Government? Was this consistent with noncooperation and civil disobedience? After so much sacrifice and brave endeavour, was our movement to tail off into something insignificant?

I felt angry with him at his religious and sentimental approach to a political question, and his frequent references to God in connection with it. He even seemed to suggest that God had indicated the very date of the fast. What a terrible example to set!

If Bapu died! What would India be like then? And how would her politics run? There seemed to be a dreary and dismal future ahead, and despair seized my heart when I thought of it.

So I thought and thought, and confusion reigned in my head, and anger

[1] From *An Autobiography* 1936, pp. 370–5.

and hopelessness, and love for him who was the cause of this upheaval. I hardly knew what to do, and I was irritable and short-tempered with everybody, and most of all with myself.

And then a strange thing happened to me. I had quite an emotional crisis, and at the end of it I felt calmer and the future seemed no so dark. Bapu had a curious knack of doing the right thing at the psychological moment, and it might be that his action—impossible to justify as it was from my point of view—would lead to great results, not only in the narrow field in which it was confined, but in the wider aspects of our national struggle. And even if Bapu died our struggle for freedom would go on. So whatever happened, one must keep ready and fit for it. Having made up my mind to face even Gandhiji's death without flinching, I felt calm and collected and ready to face the world and all it might offer.

Then came news of the tremendous upheaval all over the country, a magic wave of enthusiasm running through Hindu society, and untouchability appeared to be doomed. What a magician, I thought, was this little man sitting in Yeravada Prison, and how well he knew how to pull the strings that move people's hearts!

A telegram from him reached me. It was the first message I had received from him since my conviction, and it did me good to hear from him after that long interval. In this telegram he said:

> During all these days of agony you have been before mind's eye. I am most anxious to know your opinion. You know how I value your opinion. Saw Indu (and) Sarup's children. Indu looked happy and in possession of more flesh. Doing very well. Wire reply. Love.

It was extraordinary, and yet it was characteristic of him, that in the agony of his fast and in the mist of his many preoccupations, he should refer to the visit of my daughter and my sister's children to him, and even mention that Indira had put on flesh! (My sister was also in prison then and all these children were at school in Poona.) He never forgets the seemingly little things in life which really mean so much.

News also came to me just then that some settlement had been reached over the electorate issue. The superintendent of the gaol was good enough to allow me to send an answer to Gandhiji, and I sent him the following telegram:

> Your telegram and brief news that some settlement reached filled me with relief and joy. First news of your decision to fast caused mental agony and confusion, but ultimately optimism triumphed and I regained peace of mind. No sacrifice too great for suppressed downtrodden classes. Freedom must be judged by freedom of lowest but feel danger of other issues obscuring only goal. Am unable to judge from religious viewpoint. Danger your methods being exploited by others but how can I presume to advise a magician. Love.

Early in May 1933, Gandhiji began his twenty-one-day fast. The first news of this had again come as a shock to me, but I accepted it as an inevitable occurrence and schooled myself to it. Indeed I was irritated that people should urge him to give it up, after he had made up his mind and declared it to the public. For me the fast was an incomprehensible thing and, if I had been asked before the decision had been taken, I would certainly have spoken strongly against it. But I attached great value to Gandhiji's word, and it seemed to me wrong for anyone to try to make him break it, in a personal matter which, to him, was of supreme importance. So, unhappy as I was, I put up with it.

A few days before beginning his fast he wrote to me, a typical letter which moved me very much. As he asked for a reply I sent him the following telegram.

> Your letter. What can I say about matters I do not understand. I feel lost in strange country where you are the only familiar landmark and I try to grope my way in dark but I stumble. Whatever happens my love and thoughts will be with you.

I had struggled against my utter disapproval of his act and my desire not to hurt him. I felt, however, that I had not sent him a cheerful message, and now that he was bent on undergoing his terrible ordeal, which might even end in his death, I ought to cheer him up as much as I could. Little things make a difference psychologically, and he would have to strain every nerve to survive. I felt also that we should accept whatever happened, even his death, if unhappily it should occur, with a stout heart. So I sent him another telegram:

> Now that you are launched on your great enterprise may I send you again love and greetings and assure you that I feel more clearly now that whatever happens it is well and whatever happens you win.

He survived the fast. On the first day of it he was discharged from prison, and on his advice civil disobedience was suspended for six weeks.

Again I watched the emotional upheaval of the country during the fast, and I wondered more and more if this was the right method in politics. It seemed to be sheer revivalism, and clear thinking had not a ghost of a chance against it. All India, or most of it, stared reverently at the Mahatma and expected him to perform miracle after miracle and put an end to untouchability and get Swaraj and so on—and did precious little itself! And Gandhiji did not encourage others to think; his insistence was only on purity and sacrifice. I felt that I was drifting further and further away from him mentally, in spite of my strong emotional attachment to him. Often enough he was guided in his political activities by an unerring instinct. He had the flair for action, but was the way of faith the right way to train a nation? It might pay for a short while, but in the long run?

And I could not understand how he could accept, as he seemed to do, the present social order, which was based on violence and conflict. Within me also conflict raged, and I was torn between rival loyalties. I knew that there was trouble ahead for me, when the enforced protection of goal was removed. I felt lonely and homeless, and India, to whom I had given my love and for whom I had laboured, seemed a strange and bewildering land to me. Was it my fault that I could not enter into the spirit and ways of thinking of my countrymen? Even with my closest associates I felt that an invisible barrier came between us and, unhappy at being unable to overcome it, I shrank back into my shell. The old world seemed to envelop them, the old world of past ideologies, hopes and desires. The new world was yet far distant.

> Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
> The other powerless to be born,
> With nowhere yet to rest his head.

India is supposed to be a religious country above everything else, and Hindu and Moslem and Sikh and others take pride in their faiths and testify to their truth by breaking heads. The spectacle of what is called religion, or at any rate organized religion, in India and elsewhere has filled me with horror, and I have frequently condemned it and wished to make a clean sweep of it. Almost always it seems to stand for blind belief and reaction, dogma and bigotry, superstition and exploitation and the preservation of vested interests. And yet I knew well that there was something else in it, something which supplied a deep inner craving of human beings. How else could it have been the tremendous power it has been and brought peace and comfort to innumerable tortured souls? Was that peace merely the shelter of blind belief and absence of questioning, the calm that comes from being safe in harbour, protected from the storms of the open sea, or was it something more? In some cases certainly it was something more.

But organized religion, whatever its past may have been, today is very largely an empty form devoid of real content. Mr. G.K. Chesterton has compared it (not his own particular brand of religion, but others!) to a fossil which is the *form* of an animal or organism from which all its own organic substance has entirely disappeared, but which has kept its shape, because it has been filled up by some totally different substance. And even where something of value still remains, it is enveloped by other and harmful contents.

8

Spiritual Isolation[1]

13 August 1934

Dear Bapu,

When I heard that you had called off the civil disobedience movement, I felt unhappy. Only the brief announcement reached me at first. Much later I read your statement and this gave me one of the biggest shocks I have ever had. I was prepared to reconcile myself to the withdrawal of civil disobedience. But the reasons you gave for doing so and the suggestions you made for future work astounded me. I had a sudden and intense feeling that something broke inside me, a bond that I have valued very greatly had snapped. I felt terribly lonely in this wide world. I have always felt a little lonely almost from childhood up. But a few bonds strengthened me, a few strong supports held me up. The loneliness never went, but it was lessened. But now I felt absolutely alone, left high and dry on a desert island.

Human beings have an enormous capacity for adapting themselves and so I too adapted myself to some extent to the new conditions. The keenness of my feelings on the subject, which amounted almost to physical pain, passed off; the edge was dulled. But shock after shock, a succession of events sharpened that edge to a fine point, and allowed my mind or feelings no peace or rest. Again I felt that sensation of spiritual isolation, of being a perfect stranger out of harmony, not only as dear as close comrades. My stay in prison this time became a greater ordeal for my nerves than any previous visit had been. I almost wished that all newspapers might be kept away from me so that I might be spared these repeated shocks.

Physically I kept fairly well. I always do in prison. My body has served me well and can stand a deal of ill-treatment and strain. And being vain enough to imagine that perhaps I might yet do some effective work in this land to which fate had tied me, I looked after it well.

But I wondered often enough if I was not a square peg in a round hole, or a bubble of conceit thrown about hither and thither on an ocean which spurned me. But vanity and conceit triumphed and the intellectual apparatus that

[1] To Mahatma Gandhi, SWJN, Vol. 6, pp. 278–91. Excerpts.

functions within me refused to admit defeat. If the ideals that had spurred me to action and had kept me buoyed up through stormy weather were right—and the conviction of their rightness ever grew within me—they were bound to triumph though my generation might not live to witness that triumph.

But what had happened to those ideals during these long and weary months of this year when I was a silent and distant witness, fretting at my helplessness? Setbacks and temporary defeats are common enough in all great struggles. One grieves but one recovers soon enough. One recovers soon if the light of those ideals is not allowed to grow dim and the anchor of principles holds fast. But what I saw was not setback and defeat but that spiritual defeat which is the most terrible of all. Do not imagine that I am referring to the council entry question. I do not attach vital importance to it. Under certain circumstances I can even imagine entering a legislature myself. But whether I function inside or outside the legislature, I function as revolutionary, meaning thereby a person working for fundamental and revolutionary changes, political and social, for I am convinced that no other change can bring peace or satisfaction to India and the world.

So I thought. Not so, evidently, the leaders who were functioning outside. They began to talk the language of an age gone by before the heady wine of noncooperation and civil disobedience had fired our heads. Sometimes they used the same words and phrases but they were dead without life or real meaning. The leading figures of the Congress suddenly became those people who had obstructed us, held us back, kept aloof from the struggle and even cooperated with the opposite party in the time of our direst need. They became the high priests in our temple of freedom and many a brave soldier who had shouldered the burden in the heat and dust of the fray was not even allowed inside the temple precincts. He and many like him had become untouchables and unapproachables. And if he ventured to raise his voice and criticize the new high priests, he was shouted down and told that he was a traitor to the cause because he spoilt the harmony of the sacred precinets.

And so the flag of Indian freedom was entrusted with all pomp and circumstance to those who had actually hauled it down at the height of our national struggle at the bidding of the enemy; to those who had proclaimed from the house-tops they had given up politics (for politics were unsafe then), but who emerged with a jump to the front ranks when politics became safe.

And what of the ideals they set forth before them, speaking as they did on behalf of the Congress and the nation? A pitiful hotch-potch, avoiding real issues, toning down, as far as they dared, even the political objective of the Congress expressing a tender solicitude for every vested interest, bowing down to many a declared enemy of freedom, but showing great turbulence and courage in facing the advanced and fighting elements in the Congress ranks. Is not the Congress being rapidly reduced to a magnified edition of that shameful

spectacle, the Calcutta Corporation, during the last few years? Might not the dominant part of the Bengal Congress be called today "the society for the advancement of Mr. Nalini Ranjan Sarkar", a gentleman who rejoiced to entertain government officials, Home Members and the like when most of us were in prison and civil disobedience was supposed to be flourishing? And the other part probably a similar society for a similar laudable object? But the fault does not lie with Bengal alone. Almost everywhere there is a similar outlook. The Congress from top to bottom is a caucus and opportunism triumphs.

The Working Committee is not directly responsible for this state of affairs. But none the less the Working Committee must shoulder the responsibility. It is the leaders and their policy that shape the activities of the followers. It is neither fair nor just to throw the blame on the followers. Every language has some saying about the workman blaming his tools. The Committee had deliberately encouraged vagueness in the definition of our ideals and objectives and this is bound to lead not only to confusion but to demoralization during periods of reaction, and to the emergence of the demagogue and reactionary.

I am referring especially to the political objectives which are the special province of the Congress. I feel that the time is overdue for the Congress to think clearly on social and economic issues but I recognize that education on these issues takes time and the Congress as a whole may not be able to go as far at present as I would like it to. But it appears that whether the Working Committee knows anything about the subject or not it is perfectly willing to denounce and excommunicate people who happen to have made a special study of the subject and hold certain views. No attempt is made to understand those views, which, it is notorious, are held by a very large number of the ablest and most self-sacrificing people in the world. Those views may be right or wrong but they deserve at least some understanding before the Working Committee sets out to denounce them. It is hardly becoming for a reasoned argument to be answered by sentimental appeal or by the cheap remark that conditions in India are different and the economic laws that apply elsewhere do not function here. The resolution of the Working Committee on the subject showed such astounding ignorance of the elements of socialism that it was painful to read it and to realize that it might be read outside India. It seemed that the overmastering desire of the Committee was somehow to assure various vested interests even at the risk of talking nonsense.

A strange way of dealing with the subject of socialism is to use the word, which has a clearly defined meaning in the English language, in a totally different sense. For individuals to use words in a sense peculiar to themselves is not helpful in the commerce of ideas. A person who declares himself to be an engine-driver and then adds that his engine is of wood and is drawn by bullocks is misusing the word engine-driver.

This letter has become a much longer one than I expected and the night is already far spent. Probably I have written in a confused and scrappy way for my brain is tired. But still it will convey some picture of my mind. The last few months have been very painful ones for me and, I take it, for many others. I have felt sometimes that in the modern world, and perhaps in the ancient world also, it is often preferred to break some people's hearts rather than touch others' pockets. Pockets are indeed more valuable and more cherished than hearts and brains and bodies and human justice and dignity!

Yours affly.,
Jawaharlal

9

Impasse[1]

A friend, whose opinion I valued, wrote to me that she had been a little surprised at the vigour of some of my statements to the Press—I was almost becoming "cattish". Was this the outcome of "frustration" of my hopes? I wondered. Partly it was true, for nationally all of us suffer from frustration. Individually also it must have been true to some extent. Yet I was not very conscious of the feeling because personally I had no sensation of suppression or failure. Ever since Gandhiji came within my ken politically, I learnt one thing at least from him: not to suppress my ideas within me for fear of the consequences. That habit—followed in the political sphere (in other spheres it would be more difficult and dangerous to follow)—has often got me into trouble, but it has also brought much satisfaction with it. I think that it is because of this that many of us have escaped real bitterness of heart and the worst kinds of frustration. The knowledge also that large numbers of people think of one with affection is very soothing and is a powerful antidote against defeatism and frustration. The most terrible of all feelings, I imagine, is to be alone, forgotten by others.

But, even so, how can one escape in this strange, unhappy world a feeling of frustration? How often everything seems to go wrong, and though we carry on, doubts assail us when we see the quality of human material around us. I am afraid I feel anger and resentment often enough at various happenings and developments, and even at persons and groups. And latterly I have begun to resent more and more the drawing-room attitude to life, which ignores vital issues and considers it improper to refer to them, because they happen to touch one's pocket or pet prejudices. With all this resentment and frustration and "cattishness", I hope I have not yet lost the gift of laughing at my own and other people's follies.

I sometimes wonder at the faith of people in a beneficent Providence: how it survives shock after shock, and how disaster itself and disproof of beneficence are considered but tests of the soundness of that faith. Those delightful lines of Gerard Hopkins find an echo in many a heart:

[1] From *An Autobiography*, pp. 476–8.

Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend
With thee; but, sir, so what I plead is just.
Why do sinners' ways prosper? and why must
Disappointment all I endeavour end?
Wert thou my enemy, O thou my friend,
How wouldst thou worse, I wonder, than thou dost
Defeat, thwart me? Oh, the sots and thralls of lust
Do in spare hours more thrive than I that spend,
Sir, life upon thy cause. . . .

Faith in progress, in a cause, in ideals, in human goodness and human destiny—are they not nearly allied to faith in a Providence? If we seek to justify them by reason and logic immediately we get into difficulties. But something within us clutches to that hope and faith, for, deprived of them, life would be a wilderness without an oasis.

The effect of my socialist propaganda upset even some of my colleagues of the Working Committee. They would have put up with me without complaint, as they had done for several years during which I had been carrying on this propaganda, but I was now frightening to some extent the vested interests in the country, and my activities could no longer be called innocuous. I knew that some of my colleagues were no Socialists, but I had always thought that, as a member of the Congress Executive I had perfect freedom to carry on socialist propaganda without committing the Congress to it. The realization that some members of the Working Committee did not think that I had that freedom came as a surprise. I was putting them in a false position and they resented it. But what was I to do? I was not going to give up what I considered the most important part of my work. I would much rather resign from the Working Committee if there was a conflict between the two. But how could I resign when the Committee was illegal and was not even functioning properly?

This difficulty faced me again later—I think it was towards the end of December—when Gandhiji wrote to me from Madras. He sent me a cutting from the *Madras Mail* containing an interview he had given. The interviewer had asked him about me and he had replied almost apologizing for my activities and expressing his faith in my rectitude: I would not commit the Congress to these novel ways. I did not particularly fancy this reference to me, but what upset me much more was Gandhiji's defence, further on in the interview, of the big zamindari system. He seemed to think that this was a very desirable part of rural and national economy. This was a great surprise to me for the big zamindaris and taluqas have very few defenders today. All over the world they have been broken up, and even in India most people recognize that they cannot last long. Even taluqdars and zamindars would welcome an end of the system provided, of course, they got sufficient compensation thereof. The system is indeed

sinking of its own weight. And yet Gandhiji was in favour of it and talked of trusteeship and the like. How very different was his outlook from mine, I thought again, and I wondered how far I could cooperate with him in future. Must I continue to remain in the Working Committee? There was no way out just then, and a few weeks later the question became irrelevant because of my return to prison.

10

Gandhi and Nonviolence[1]

The Congress had long ago accepted the principle and practice of nonviolence in its application to our struggle for freedom and in building up unity in the nation. At no time had it gone beyond that position or applied the principle to defence from external aggression or internal disorder. Indeed it had taken an eager interest in the development of the Indian army and frequently demanded the Indianization of its officer personnel. The Congress party in the Central Legislature had often moved or participated in resolutions on this subject.

At no time, so far as I am aware, was the question of nonviolence considered in relation to the army, navy, or air forces, or the police. It was taken for granted that its application was confined to our struggle for freedom. It is true that it had a powerful effect on our thinking in many ways, and it made the Congress strongly favour world disarmament and a peaceful solution of all international, as well as national, disputes.

When the Congress governments were functioning in the provinces, many of them were eager to encourage some form of military training in the universities and colleges. It was the Government of India that disapproved of this and came in the way.

Gandhiji, no doubt, disapproved of these tendencies, but he did not interfere. He did not even like the use of the police as an armed force for the suppression of riots, and he expressed his distress at it. But he put up with it as a lesser evil, and hoped that his teaching would gradually sink into the mind of India. It was his disapproval of such tendencies within the Congress that led him to sever his formal membership connection with the Congress in the early thirties, though even so he continued as the undoubted leader and adviser of the Congress. It was an anomalous and unsatisfactory position for all of us, but perhaps it made him feel that thus he was not personally responsible for all the varied decisions which Congress took from time to time, which did not wholly conform to his principles and convictions. Always there has been that inner conflict within him and in our national politics, between Gandhi as a national leader and Gandhi as a man with a prophetic message, which was not confined to India but was for humanity and the world. It is never easy to reconcile a strict

[1] From *The Discovery of India*, pp. 443–5.

adherence to truth as one sees it, with the exigencies and expediencies of life, and especially of political life. Normally people do not even worry themselves over this problem. They keep truth apart in some corner of their minds, if they keep it at all anywhere, and accept expediency as the measure of action. In politics that has been the universal rule, not only because, unfortunately, politicians are a peculiar species of opportunists, but because they cannot act purely on the personal plane. They have to make others act, and so they have to consider the limitations of others and their understanding of, and receptivity to, truth. And because of this they have to make compromises with that truth and adapt it to the prevailing circumstances. That adaptation becomes inevitable, and yet there are always risks attending it; the tendency to ignore and abandon truth grows, and expediency becomes the sole criterion of action.

Gandhi, for all his rock-like adherence to certain principles, has shown a great capacity to adapt himself to others and to changing circumstances, to take into consideration the strength and weakness of those others, especially of the mass of the people, and how far they were capable of acting up to the truth as he saw it. But from time to time he pulls himself up, as if he were afraid that he had gone too far in his compromising, and returns to his moorings. In the midst of action, he seems to be in tune with the mass mind, responsive to its capacity and therefore adapting himself to it to some extent; at other times he becomes more theoretical and apparently less adaptable. There is also the same difference observable in his action and his writings. This is confusing to his own people, and more so to others who are ignorant of the background in India.

How far a single individual can influence a people's thought and ideology, it is difficult to say. Some people in history have exerted a powerful influence, and yet, it may be that they have emphasized and brought out something that already existed in the mind of the people, or have given clear and pointed expression to the vaguely felt ideas of the age. Gandhi's influence on India's mind has been profound in the present age; how long and in what form it will endure, only the future can show. His influence is not limited to those who agree with him or accept him as a national leader; it extends to those also who disagree with him and criticize him. Very few persons in India accept in its entirety his doctrine of nonviolence or his economic theories, yet very many have been influenced by them in some way or other. Usually speaking in terms of religion, he has emphasized the moral approach to political problems as well as those of everyday life. The religious background has affected those chiefly who were inclined that way, but the moral approach has influenced others also. Many have been appreciably raised to higher levels of moral and ethical action, many more have been forced to think at least in those terms, and that thought itself has some effect on action and behaviour. Politics cease to be just expediency and opportunism, as they usually have been everywhere, and there is a continuous moral tussle preceding thought and action. Expediency, or what appears to be

immediately possible and desirable, can never be ignored, but it is toned down by other considerations and a longer view of more distant consequences.

Gandhi's influence in these various directions has pervaded India and left its mark. But it is not because of his nonviolence or economic theories that he has become the foremost and most outstanding of India's leaders. To the vast majority of India's people he is the symbol of India determined to be free, of militant nationalism, of a refusal to submit to arrogant might, of never agreeing to anything involving national dishonour. Though many people in India may disagree with him on a hundred matters, though they may criticize him or even part company from him on some particular issue, at a time of action and struggle when India's freedom is at stake they flock to him again and look up to him as their inevitable leader.

When Gandhiji raised in 1940 the question of nonviolence in relation to the war and the future of free India, the Congress Working Committee had to face the issue squarely. They made it clear to him that they were unable to go as far as he wanted them to go and could not possibly commit India or the Congress to future applications of this principle in the external domain. This led to a definite and public break with him on this issue. Two months later further discussions led to an agreed formula which was later adopted as part of a resolution by the All-India Congress Committee. That formula did not wholly represent Gandhiji's attitude; it represented what he agreed, perhaps unwillingly, that Congress should say on this subject. At that time the British Government had already rejected the latest offer made by the Congress for cooperation in the war on the basis of a national government. Some kind of conflict was approaching and, as was inevitable, both Gandhiji and Congress looked towards each other and were impelled by a desire to find a way out of the deadlock between them. The formula did not refer to the war, as just previously our offer of cooperation had been uncermoniously and utterly rejected. It dealt theoretically with the Congress policy in regard to nonviolence, and for the first time stated how, in the opinion of the Congress, the free India of the future should apply it in its external relations.

11

Merging with the Masses[1]

The approach of the war to India disturbed Gandhi greatly. It was not easy to fit in his policy and programme of nonviolence with this new development. Obviously civil disobedience was out of the question in the face of an invading army or between two opposing armies. Passivity or acceptance of invasion were equally out of the question. What then? His own colleagues, and the Congress generally, had rejected nonviolence for such an occasion or as an alternative to armed resistance to invasion, and he had at last agreed that they had a right to do so; but he was nonetheless troubled and for his own part, as an individual, he could not join any violent course of action. But he was much more than an individual; whether he had any official status or not in the nationalist movement, he occupied an outstanding and dominating position and his word carried weight with large numbers of people.

Gandhiji knew India, and especially the Indian masses, as very few, if any, have known them in the past or the present. Not only had he widely travelled all over India and come into touch with millions of people, but there was something else which enabled him to come into emotional contact with those masses. He could merge himself with the masses, feel with them, and because they were conscious of this they gave him their devotion and loyalty. And yet his view of India was to some extent coloured by the outlook he had imbibed in his early days in Gujarat. The Gujaratis were essentially a community of peaceful traders and merchants, influenced by the Jain doctrine of nonviolence. Other parts of India had been influenced much less by this, and some not at all. The widespread Kshatriya class of warriors certainly did not allow it to interfere with war or hunting wild animals. Other classes also, including the Brahmins, had been as a whole little influenced by it. But Gandhiji took an eclectic view of the development of Indian thought and history, and believed that nonviolence had been the basic principle underlying it, even though there had been many deviations from it. That view appeared to be far-fetched and many Indian thinkers and historians did not agree with it. This had nothing to do with the merits of nonviolence in the present stage of human existence, but it did indicate a historical bias in Gandhiji's mind.

[1] From *The Discovery of India*, pp. 45–53.

The accidents of geography have had a powerful effect on determining national character and history. The fact that India was cut off by the tremendous barrier of the Himalayas and by the sea produced a sense of unity in this wide area and at the same time bred exclusiveness. Over this vast territory a vivid and homogenous civilization grew up which had plenty of scope for expansion and development, and which continued to preserve a strong cultural unity. Yet within that unity geography again produced diversity. The huge northern and central plain differed from the hilly and variegated areas of the Deccan, and the people living in different geographical areas developed different characteristics. History also took a different course in the north and in the south, though often the two overlapped and joined hands. The flatness of the land, and the vast open spaces of the north, as in Russia, required powerful central governments for protection against external enemies. Empires flourished in the south as well as the north, but the north was really the centre of empire and often dominated the south. A strong central government in the old days inevitably meant autocracy. It was not a mere accident of history that the Mughal Empire was broken up, among other causes, by the Marathas. The Marathas came from the hilly tracts of the Deccan, and had preserved some spirit of independence when the great majority of the dwellers on the northern plains had grown servile and submissive. The British had an easy victory in Bengal, and the people of the fertile plains there submitted with extraordinary docility. Having established themselves there they spread elsewhere.

Geography counts still and must count in the future, but other factors play a more important role now. Mountains and seas are no longer barriers, but they still determine a people's character and a country's political and economic position. They cannot be ignored in considering new schemes of division, partition or re-merging, unless the planning is on a world scale.

Gandhiji's knowledge of India and the Indian people is profound. Though not greatly interested in history as such, and perhaps not possessing that feeling for history, that historical sense, which some people have, he is fully conscious and intimately aware of the historical roots of the Indian people. He is well informed about current events and follows them carefully, though inevitably he concentrates on present-day Indian problems. He has a capacity for picking out the essence of a problem or a situation, avoiding non-essentials. Judging everything by what he considers the moral aspect, he gets a certain grip and a longer perspective. Bernard Shaw has said that though he (Gandhi) may commit any number of tactical errors, his essential strategy continues to be right. Most people, however, are not much concerned with the long run; they are far more interested in the tactical advantage of the moment.

12

Concept of Satyagraha[1]

And I yearn to lay my head
Where the grass is cool and sweet.
Mother, all the dreams are fled
From the tired child at thy feet.

April came. Rumours reached me in my cell in Alipore of happenings outside, rumours that were unpleasant and disturbing. The Superintendent of the gaol informed me casually one day that Mr. Gandhi had withdrawn civil disobedience. I knew no more. The news was not welcome, and I felt sad at this winding-up of something that had meant so much to me for many years. And yet I reasoned with myself that the end was bound to come. I knew in my heart that some time or other civil disobedience would have to be wound up, for the time being at least. Individuals may hold almost indefinitely, regardless of the consequences, but national organizations do not behave in this manner. I had no doubt that Gandhiji had interpreted correctly the mind of the country and of the great majority of Congressmen, and I tried to reconcile myself to the new development, unpleasant as it was.

I heard also vaguely of the new move to revive the old Swaraj Party in order to enter the legislatures. That too seemed inevitable, and I had long been of opinion that the Congress could not keep aloof from future elections. During the five months of my freedom outside prison I had tried to discourage this tendency, for I thought it premature and likely to divert attention both from direct action and from the development of new ideas of social change which were fermenting in the Congress ranks. The longer the crisis continued, I thought, the more would these ideas spread among our masses and intelligentsia and the realities underlying our political and economic situation be laid bare. As Lenin has said somewhere: "Any and every political crisis is useful because it brings to the light what was hidden, reveals the actual forces involved in politics; it exposes lies and deceptive phrases and fictions; it demonstrates comprehensively the facts, and forces on the people the understanding of what

[1] From *An Autobiography*, pp. 504–13.

is the reality." I had hoped that this process would result in making the Congress a clearer-minded and a more compact body with a definite goal. Probably some of its weaker elements might drop out. That would be no loss. And when the time came for the ending of even theoretical direct action and a reversion to so-called constitutional and legal methods, the advanced and really active wing of the Congress would utilize even these methods from the larger point of view of our final objective.

That time apparently had come. But to my dismay I found that the people who had been the backbone of civil disobedience and effective work in the Congress were receding into the background, and others, who had taken no such part, were taking command.

Some days later the weekly *Statesman* came to me, and I read in it the statement which Gandhiji had issued when withdrawing civil disobedience. I read it with amazement and sinking of heart. Again and again I read it, and civil disobedience and much else vanished from my mind and other doubts, and conflicts filled it. "This statement," wrote Gandhiji, "owes its inspiration to a personal chat with the inmates and associates of the Satyagraha Ashram. . . . More especially is it due to a revealing information I got in the course of a conversation about a valued companion of long standing who was found reluctant to perform the full prison task, preferring his private studies to the allotted task. This was undoubtedly contrary to the rules of satyagraha. More than the imperfection of the friend whom I love, more than ever it brought home to me my own imperfections. The friend said he had thought that I was aware of his weakness. I was blind. Blindness in a leader is unpardonable. I saw at once that I must for the time being remain the sole representative of civil resistance in action."

The imperfection or fault, if such it was, of the "friend" was a very trivial affair. I confess that I have often been guilty of it and I am wholly unrepentant. But even if it was a serious matter, was a vast national movement involving scores of thousands directly and millions indirectly to be thrown out of gear because an individual had erred? This seemed to me a monstrous proposition and an immoral one. I cannot presume to speak of what is and what is not satyagraha, but in my own little way I have endeavoured to follow certain standards of conduct, and all those standards were shocked and upset by this statement of Gandhiji's. I knew that Gandhiji usually acts on instinct (I prefer to call it that than the "inner voice" or an answer to prayer), and very often that instinct is right. He has repeatedly shown what a wonderful knack he has of sensing the mass mind and of acting at the psychological moment. The reasons which he afterwards adduces to justify his action are usually afterthoughts and seldom carry one very far. A leader or a man of action in a crisis always acts subconsciously and then thinks of the reasons for his action. I felt also that Gandhiji had acted rightly in suspending civil resistance. But the reason he had given seemed

to me an insult to intelligence and an amazing performance for a leader of a national movement. He was perfectly entitled to treat his ashram inmates in any manner he liked; they had taken all kinds of pledges and accepted a certain regime. But the Congress had not done so; I had not done so. Why should we be tossed hither and thither for, what seemed to me, metaphysical and mystical reasons in which I was not interested? Was it conceivable to have any political movement on this basis? I had willingly accepted the moral aspect of satyagraha as I understood it (within certain limits I admit). That basic aspect appealed to me and it seemed to raise politics to a higher and nobler level. I was prepared to agree that the end does not justify all kinds of means. But this new development or interpretation was something much more far-reaching and it held forth some possibilities which frightened me.

The whole statement frightened and oppressed me tremendously. And then finally the advice he gave to Congressmen was that "they must learn the art and beauty of self-denial and voluntary poverty. They must engage themselves in nation-building activities, the spread of khaddar through personal hand-spinning and hand-weaving, the spread of communal unity of hearts by irreproachable personal conduct towards one another in every walk of life, the banishing of untouchability in every shape or form in one's own person, the spread of total abstinence from intoxicating drinks and drugs by personal contact with individual addicts and generally by cultivating personal purity. These are services which provide maintenance on the poor man's scale. Those for whom the poor man's scale is not feasible should find a place in small unorganized industries of national importance which give a better wage."

This was the political programme that we were to follow. A vast distance seemed to separate him from me. With a stab of pain I felt that the chords of allegiance that had bound me to him for many years had snapped. For long a mental tussle had been going on within me. I had not understood or appreciated much that Gandhiji had done. His fasts and his concentration on other issues during the continuance of civil disobedience, when his comrades were in the grip of the struggle, his personal and self-created entanglements, which led him to the extraordinary position that, while out of prison, he was yet pledged to himself not to take part in the political movement, his new loyalties and pledges which put in the shade the old loyalty and pledge and job, undertaken together with many colleagues, while yet that job was unfinished, had all oppressed me. During my short period out of prison I had felt these and other differences more than ever. Gandhiji had stated that there were temperamental differences between us. They were perhaps more than temperamental, and I realized that I held clear and definite views about many matters which were opposed to his. And yet in the past I had tried to subordinate them, as far as I could, to what I conceived to be the larger loyalty—the cause of national freedom for which the Congress seemed to be working. I tried to be loyal and

faithful to my leader and my colleagues, for in my spiritual make-up loyalty to a cause and to one's colleagues holds a high place. I fought many a battle within myself when I felt that I was being dragged away from the anchor of my spiritual faith. Somehow I managed to compromise. Perhaps I did wrong, for it can never be right for anyone to let go of that anchor. But in the conflict of ideals I clung to my loyalty to my colleagues, and hoped that the rush of events and the development of our struggle might dissolve the difficulties that troubled me and bring my colleagues nearer to my viewpoint.

And now? Suddenly I felt very lonely in that cell of Alipore Gaol. Life seemed to be a dreary affair, a very wilderness of desolation. Of the many hard lessons that I had learnt, the hardest and the most painful now faced me: that it is not possible in any vital matter to rely on anyone. One must journey through life alone; to rely on others is to invite heart-break.

Some of my accumulated irritation turned to religion and the religious outlook. What an enemy this was to clearness of thought and fixity of purpose, I thought; for was it not based on emotion and passion? Presuming to be spiritual, how far removed it was from real spirituality and things of the spirit. Thinking in terms of some other world, it had little conception of human values and social values and social justice. With its preconceived notions it deliberately shut its eyes to reality for fear that this might not fit in with them. It based itself on truth, and yet so sure was it of having discovered it, and the whole of it, that it did not take the trouble to search for it; all that concerned it was to tell others of it. The will to truth was not the same thing as the will to believe. It talked of peace and yet supported systems and organizations that could not exist but for violence. It condemned the violence of the sword, but what of the violence that comes quietly and often in peaceful garb and starves and kills; or worse still, without doing any outward physical injury, outrages the mind and crushes the spirit and breaks the heart?

And then I thought of him again who was the cause of this commotion within me. What a wonderful man was Gandhiji after all, with his amazing and almost irresistible charm and subtle power over people. His writings and his sayings conveyed little enough impression of the man behind; his personality was far bigger than they would lead one to think. And his services to India, how vast they had been. He had instilled courage and manhood in her people, and discipline and endurance, and the power of joyful sacrifice for a cause, and, with all his humility, pride. Courage is the one sure foundation of character, he had said, without courage there is no morality, no religion, no love. "One cannot follow truth or love so long as one is subject to fear." With all his horror of violence, he had told us that "cowardice is a thing even more hateful than violence". And "discipline is the pledge and guarantee that a man means business. There is no deliverance and no hope without sacrifice, discipline, and self-control. Mere sacrifice without discipline will be unavailing." Words only and pious

phrases perhaps, rather platitudinous, but there was power behind the words, and India knew that this little man meant business.

He came to represent India to an amazing degree and to express the very spirit of that ancient and tortured land. Almost he was India, and his very failings were Indian failings. A slight to him was hardly a personal matter, it was an insult to the nation; and Viceroys and others who indulged in these disdainful gestures little realized what a dangerous crop they were sowing. I remember how hurt I was when I first learnt that the Pope had refused an interview to Gandhiji when he was returning from the Round Table Conference in December 1931. That refusal seemed to me an affront to India, and there can be no doubt that the refusal was intentional, though the affront was probably not thought of. . . .

But Gandhiji's greatness or his services to India or the tremendous debt I personally owed to him were not in question. In spite of all that, he might be hopelessly in the wrong in many matters. What, after all, was he aiming at? In spite of the closest association with him for many years I am not clear in my own mind about his objective. I doubt if he is clear himself. One step enough for me, he says, and he does not try to peep into the future or to have a clearly conceived end before him. Look after the means and the end will take care of itself, he is never tired of repeating. Be good in your personal individual lives and all else will follow. That is not a political or scientific attitude, nor is it perhaps even an ethical attitude. It is narrowly moralist, and it begs the question: What is goodness? Is it merely an individual affair or a social affair? Gandhiji lays all stress on character and attaches little importance to intellectual training and development. Intellect without character is likely to be dangerous, but what is character without intellect? How, indeed, does character develop? Gandhiji has been compared to the medieval Christian saints, and much that he says seems to fit in with this. It does not fit in at all with modern psychological experience and method.

But however this may be, vagueness in an objective seems to me deplorable. Action to be effective must be directed to clearly conceived ends. Life is not all logic, and those ends will have to be varied from time to time to fit in with it, but some end must always be clearly envisaged.

I imagine that Gandhiji is not so vague about the objective as he sometimes appears to be. He is passionately desirous of going in a certain direction, but this is wholly at variance with modern ideas and conditions, and he has so far been unable to fit the two, or to chalk out all the intermediate steps leading to his goal. Hence, the appearance of vagueness and avoidance of clarity. But his general inclination has been clear enough for a quarter of a century, ever since he started formulating his philosophy in South Africa. I do not know if those early writings still represent his views. I doubt if they do so in their entirety, but they do help us to understand the background of his thought.

"India's salvation consists," he wrote in 1909, "in unlearning what she has learnt during the last fifty years. The railways, telegraphs, hospitals, lawyers, doctors, and such-like have all to go; and the so-called upper classes have to learn consciously, religiously, and deliberately the simple peasant life, knowing it to be a life giving true happiness." And again: "Every time I get into a railway car or use a motor-bus I know that I am doing violence to my sense of what is right"; "to attempt to reform the world by means of highly artificial and speedy locomotion is to attempt the impossible."

All this seems to me utterly wrong and harmful doctrine, and impossible of achievement. Behind it lies Gandhiji's love and praise of poverty and suffering and the ascetic life. For him progress and civilization consist not in the multiplication of wants, of higher standards of living, "but in the deliberate and voluntary restriction of wants, which promotes real happiness and contentment, and increases the capacity for service." If these premises are once accepted it becomes easy to follow the rest of Gandhiji's thought and to have a better understanding of his activities. But most of us do not accept those premises and yet we complain later on when we find that his activities are not to our liking.

Personally I dislike the praise of poverty and suffering. I do not think they are at all desirable, and they ought to be abolished. Nor do I appreciate the ascetic life as a social ideal, though it may suit individuals. I understand and appreciate simplicity, equality, self-control, but not the mortification of the flesh. Just as an athlete requires to train his body, I believe that the mind and habits have also to be trained and brought under control. It would be absurd to expect that a person who is given to too much self-indulgence can endure much suffering or show unusual self-control or behave like a hero when the crisis comes. To be in good moral condition requires at least as much training as to be in good physical condition. But that certainly does not mean asceticism or self-mortification.

Nor do I appreciate in the least the idealization of the "simple peasant life". I have almost a horror of it, and instead of submitting to it myself I want to drag out even the peasantry from it, not to urbanization, but to the spread of urban cultural facilities to rural areas. Far from this life giving me true happiness, it would be almost as bad as imprisonment for me. What is there in the "Man with the Hoe" to idealize over? Crushed and exploited for innumerable generations he is only little removed from the animals who keep him company.

> Who made him dead to rapture and despair,
> A thing that grieves not and that never hopes,
> Stolid and stunned, a brother to the ox?

This desire to get away from the mind of man to primitive conditions where mind does not count, seems to me quite incomprehensible. The very thing that is the glory and triumph of man is decried and discouraged, and a

physical environment which will oppress the mind and prevent its growth is considered desirable. Present-day civilization is full of evils, but it is also full of good; and it has the capacity in it to rid itself of those evils. To destroy it root and branch is to remove that capacity from it and revert to a dull, sunless and miserable existence. But even if that were desirable it is an impossible undertaking. We cannot stop the river of change or cut ourselves adrift from it, and psychologically we who have eaten of the apple of Eden cannot forget that taste and go back to primitiveness.

It is difficult to argue this, for the two standpoints are utterly different. Gandhiji is always thinking in terms of personal salvation and of sin, while most of us have society's welfare uppermost in our minds. I find it difficult to grasp the idea of sin, and perhaps it is because of this that I cannot appreciate Gandhiji's general outlook. He is not out to change society or the social structure, he devotes himself to the eradication of sin from individuals. . . .

For him "any union is a crime when the desire for progeny is absent", and "the adoption of artificial methods must result in imbecility and nervous prostration." "It is wrong and immoral to seek to escape the consequences of one's acts. . . . It is bad for him to indulge his appetite and then escape the consequences by taking tonics or other medicines. It is still worse for a person to indulge his animal passions and escape the consequences of his acts."

Personally I find this attitude unnatural and shocking, and if he is right, then I am a criminal on the verge of imbecility and nervous prostration. The Roman Catholics have also vigorously opposed birth-control, but they have not carried their argument to the logical limit as Gandhiji has done. They have temporized and compromised with what they considered to be human nature. But Gandhiji has gone to the extreme limit of his argument and does not recognize the validity or necessity of the sexual act at any time except for the sake of children; he refuses to recognize any natural sex attraction between man and woman. "But I am told," he says, "that this is an impossible ideal, that I do not take account of the natural attraction between man and woman. I refuse to believe that the sensual affinity, referred to here, can be at all regarded as natural; in that case the deluge would soon be over us. The natural affinity between man and woman is the attraction between brother and sister, mother and son, or father and daughter. It is this natural attraction that sustains the world." And more emphatically still: "No, I must declare with all the power I can command that sensual attraction, even between husband and wife, is unnatural."

In these days of the Oedipus complex and Freud and the spread of psychoanalytical ideas this emphatic statement of belief sounds strange and distant. One can accept it as an act of faith or reject it. There is no half-way house, for it is a question of faith, not of reason. For my part I think Gandhiji is absolutely wrong in this matter. His advice may fit in with some cases, but as a general policy it can only lead to frustration, inhibition, neurosis, and all manner of

physical and nervous ills. Sexual restraint is certainly desirable, but I doubt if Gandhiji's doctrine is likely to result in this to any widespread extent. It is too extreme, and most people decide that it is beyond their capacity and go their usual ways, or there is friction between husband and wife. Evidently Gandhiji thinks that birth-control methods necessarily mean inordinate indulgence in the sex act, and that if the sexual affinity between man and woman is admitted, every man will run after every woman, and vice versa. Neither inference is justified, and I do not know why he is so obsessed by this problem of sex, important as it is. For him it is a "soot or whitewash" question, there are no intermediate shades. At either end he takes up an extreme position which seems to me most abnormal and unnatural. Perhaps this is a reaction from the deluge of literature on sexology that is descending on us in these days. I presume I am a normal individual and sex has played its part in my life, but it has not obsessed me or diverted me from my other activities. It has been a subordinate part.

Essentially, his attitude is that of the ascetic who has turned his back to the world and its ways, who denies life and considers it evil. For an ascetic that is natural, but it seems far-fetched to apply it to men and women of the world who accept life and try to make the most of it. And in avoiding one evil he puts up with many other and graver evils.

13

Fast[1]

15 February

Sixth day of Bapu's fast![2] Four days since we heard of it—four days of reversal of our routine and mental upsets.

I remembered the day in Dehra Dun Jail, about ten years ago, when I first heard of Bapu's fast on the untouchability question. How vastly excited and upset I was. It was so totally unexpected and the future became dark.

On this occasion there was no such violent reaction though of course it was all very disturbing. Why? Partly, I suppose, because I am older and more thick-skinned; more hardened to blows; more used to disasters and sorrow. These last ten years have had these in abundance.

17 February

I doubt if anyone of us believes that Bapu will die because of this fast. Whether the wish is father to the thought, or because of some other reasons, we convince ourselves that something surely will happen. Either he will fast for the full 21 days and survive or, if his condition becomes dangerous, he will be released. Even so, the thought of his possible death always hovers in the background. And this again gives rise to innumerable other chains of thought.

All his letters to the Viceroy, good enough in a way, are disappointing to me. What a difference in tone from his pre-arrest utterances! There was fire then and sparks of electricity flew about from his words and phrases. Now also there is certainly strength and firmness of purpose, but also a tone of justification, of defence, of legal reasoning. It is not the ringing language of defiance, come what may. As usual, perhaps he reflects the mood of the country. . . .

But on the political plane what does all this mean? I do not know and this utter lack of knowledge is distressing. I do not like being thrown out on

[1] 1943, Prison Diary, JN Collection, NMML. Excerpts.

[2] Mahatma Gandhi undertook a fast for 21 days from 10 February 1943 in the Aga Khan Palce at Pune in protest against the Government accusation that he was responsible for the disturbances in the country after 9 August 1942. He also considered the fast as a measure of self-purification.

uncharted seas of action. It is bad enough to have to face the uncertainties and chances of human affairs. But there is no help for it; one has to face them. To add to them a kind of activity which appears to have little to do with reason or logic and is probably based on emotion, makes matters much worse.

I remember the turmoil I was in nearly ten years ago, or was it nine in Alipur Jail, when news came of Bapu's statement on the Bihar earthquake, etc. So many other statements of his come to my mind. It is all a curious mix-up. Is this inherent in the satyagraha method?

Yet, in spite of all this, I am far less disturbed than I was in Alipur or previously in Dehra Dun. Is this just resignation or a deliberate toughening of my texture? What does it matter after all what happens? So much evil and misfortune shadow the world that a little more or less does not make much difference. One thing cannot be taken from us—to act with courage and dignity and to stick to ideals. But that is hardly the politicians' way.

Are we politicians? I suppose so. But not very pliable or opportunist enough to be successful as such. The real politician type is Jinnah, or the honourable members of the Viceroy's Council! . . .

What will happen if Bapu dies? *An end* of an era in India and a bitterness that will eat into the very soil of India. The last chance of any settlement or compromise with Britain will go, on any basis—perhaps the chance has already gone. It will be war in every way then, war continuously whatever the ups and downs might be. . . .

If he survives, either in detention or outside—what then? Anticlimax!

No, I do not like the prospects either way.

28 February

Wonderful old man! How he has again stirred to its uttermost depths the heart of India! The demand for his release has grown and grown till it became a passionate cry from every part of India. I am glad the British Government resisted this and refused to release him. It seems almost inhuman to say so, and now that he is through, one can just think this way. But, in the long run, it is good that the vast difference between the people of India and the British Government should have been emphasized in this way. If he had been released there might have been a reaction in favour of the govt. which would have largely covered their sins.

30 March

Someone said this evening: "Death is the birthright of every person born"—an obvious platitude. And yet it stuck in my memory and seemed an apt way of putting it. It is much more than a birthright. Yet it is something that is or should be, if we do not lack courage, within our power to achieve. If we cannot

master life, we can at least master death. It is a pleasing thought and it lessens the feeling of helplessness.

Not that I think at all of death, that is of my death. At the back of my mind I have some kind of a conviction that I shall live for many years. Vaguely I imagine that I shall live to 70 at least and maybe 75—There is no particular reason for fixing this age, except that both father and mother were just 70 when they died. I am healthier than either and so I might exceed that limit,—provided—there are so many provisos!

Also there is a feeling that I shall yet do something worthwhile. That gives an incentive to life—And so I am very far from thinking in terms of death. The passing of the years worries me for they mean a lessening of the possible period for constructive activity—if I ever get the chance for it!

Sometimes, rarely, death seems not so bad—this is not so much because of personal frustration—I am not conscious of that to any marked extent. But the world, and all the evil and badness and violence and wickedness and vulgarity and futility of it, oppresses me occasionally. Will it ever really improve? Every virtue seems inevitably to be accompanied by a vice. Nothing seems to be just good, just right, just appropriate, and wholly worthwhile.

2 April

Bapu's insensitiveness to America and even to China (the latter partly overcome later) could not be got over or forgotten, even by subsequent statements. I think it is true that Bapu in this as in many other things reflected the mind of the great majority of people of India. But he ignored too much the wider international aspects. All my efforts for the last ten years or more disappeared almost into thin air—not quite though, especially in regard to China. Nationalism was dominant and internationalism receded.

Inevitable perhaps, all this, if we remember our background in India. There was and is no way out except through conflict between Indian nationalism and British imperialism. But still the question remained of the nature and methods and timing of this conflict. Obviously, to my thinking, we erred in some of these matters. Yet even that error was perhaps inevitable. As it was even we fell, for the moment, between two evils. We could not control the vast anti-British sentiment that existed and had grown, nor could we direct it into disciplined channels. We could not prevent some highly objectionable method of violence, and at the same time we did not and could not encourage violence as a while. As Maulana has said here if there was to be violence, we ought to have taken to it in a more disciplined and organized way. What was the good of these petty and irritating outbursts of violence?

On the other hand, much as I disliked what happened, I had the feeling, and so no doubt had others, that to submit to aggression and governmental

violence and repression without striking back, was spiritual death. Anything better than that. . . .

Nonviolence and violence! How we have got entangled into them. It hardly seems possible that we shall ever go back now to our ways and methods of the past 23 years, even if we want to. The war itself breeds the mentality of violence. How can we ask people to defend the country against a foreign aggressor with all methods of violence and, at the same time, ask them to be nonviolent in their struggle for national freedom? That was the conflict in the subconscious mind of India.

14

Hindu-Muslim Riot[1]

New Delhi, 17 January 1948

My dear Premier,

Since I last wrote to you, everything that has happened has been completely overshadowed by Gandhiji's fast.[2] It has come on us suddenly and stunned even many of us who know him well. I am writing this letter with a prayer in my heart—which I have not ceased to make ever since I first heard of the fast—that we may be spared the supreme tragedy. It is not necessary that I should write and explain to you the significance which Gandhiji attaches to the fast; he has done it himself and it is impossible for others, however closely associated with him, to interpret his unique approach any more clearly than he can. There is, however, one aspect which may be useful for me to mention, particularly to those Premiers who are far removed from the gruesome events of Punjab and Delhi.

The last prolonged fast which Gandhiji undertook was in 1943 when he was a prisoner. That fast was for a purpose which the man in the street understood and wholly sympathized with. His recent fast in Calcutta was also for an easily understood purpose which had the support of the overwhelming bulk of the people. The fast which he has now undertaken is less easy for the general public to understand; and in fact there are sections of them, more particularly among the refugees, who do not sympathize with it and are in a sense antagonistic to it. Therein lies its significance and supreme courage.

We are faced, particularly in East Punjab and Delhi, with the psychological problem created by the events of the last few months. These have created in the minds of people, not merely among the refugees but also among others, a bitterness, a sense of desperation and a desire for retaliation—in short, a serious spiritual malaise. This is wholly understandable but nonetheless extremely

[1] To Chief Ministers, 17 January 1948. SWJN, Vol. 5 (II series), pp. 306–7. Excerpts.

[2] The Indian cabinet decided in January 1948 to withhold payment of Rs 55 crores due to Pakistan as part of the assets of partition, until a settlement had been reached about Kashmir. Gandhi termed the withholding of payment as the 'first dishonourable act' of the new Government. He started a fast on 13 January in protest; the cabinet reopened the question and reserved their decision. The fast lasted five days.

dangerous. We have all of us done our best to cure it but have not succeeded except only to a limited extent. The difficulties have been partly due to our inability to tackle effectively the problem of rehabilitation about which I shall write further in this letter and partly to the continuing evidence of hostility and barbaric conduct towards the minorities in Pakistan. The result has been that sections of the Hindu community are not in tune with and do not understand Gandhiji's approach to the Muslim problem in India. They resent his approach and think that it is somehow or other inimical to their own interests. And yet any person with vision can see that Gandhiji's approach is not only morally correct, but is also essentially practical. Indeed, it is the only possible approach if we think in terms of the nation's good, both from the short and long-distance points of view. Any other approach means perpetuating conflict and postponing all notions of national consolidation and progress.

This is not the occasion to analyse—no one can analyse them—the complexity of urges which must have driven Gandhiji to take this supreme step but quite clearly its main purpose is to make the majority community in India search its heart and purge itself of hatred and the desire to retaliate. In the atmosphere in which it has been undertaken, it displays a degree of heroism of which only Gandhiji is capable. The ordeal has been made worse for him by the tragic events that have occurred in Pakistan in the last few days—the murder and wholesale looting in Karachi[3] and the revolting attack on a non-Muslim refugee train in Gujarat in West Punjab.[4] But these incidents, in Gandhiji's conception, are not merely wholly irrelevant but only increase the urgency of the step that he has taken.

I am sure you will mobilize all your resources to emphasize to the people of your province, by every possible means, the meaning and purpose of the fast and thus help to create a situation in which Gandhiji may break it. I regard the emergency created by the fast as at least as grave as the disease that has given rise to it; and if we do not go all out to meet it, history will not forgive us.

Sincerely yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

[3] On 6 January 1948, a mob attacked Sikh refugees collected in a *gurdwara* in Karachi. The *gurdwara* was set on fire and all but a few Sikhs were killed. Later, murder and looting of minorities spread to other parts of the city.

[4] On the night of 11–12 January 1948, a mob of Pathans attacked a refugee train at the Gujarat railway station in Pakistan, overpowered the Indian military escort, massacred or kidnapped about 1,700 of the 2,400 passengers and looted their property.

15

The Light has Gone Out[1]

The light has gone out from our lives and there is darkness everywhere. And I do not know what to tell you and how to say it. Our beloved leader, Bapu, as we called him, the Father of the Nation, is no more.[2] Perhaps I am wrong to say that. Nevertheless, we will not see him again as we have seen him for these many years. We will not run to him for advice and seek solace from him; and that is a terrible blow, not to me only, but to millions and millions in this country. And it is a little difficult to soften the blow by any advice that I or anyone else can give you.

The light has gone out, I said, and yet I was wrong. For the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light. The light that has illumined this country for these many, many years will illumine this country for many more years, and a thousand years later that light will still be seen in this country, and the world will see it, and it will give solace to innumerable hearts. For that light represented something more than the immediate present; it represented the living, eternal truths reminding us of the right path, drawing us from error, taking this ancient country to freedom.

All this has happened when there was so much more for him to do. We could never, of course, do away with him, we could never think that he was unnecessary, or that he had done his task. But now, particularly, when we are faced with so many difficulties, his not being with us is a blow most terrible to bear.

A madman has put an end to his life, for I can only call him mad who did it. And yet there has been enough of poison spread in this country during the

[1] Broadcast to the nation announcing the death of Mahatma Gandhi, 30 January 1948. AIR tapes, NMML. Excerpts.

[2] On 30 January 1948, at about 5 p.m., Mahatma Gandhi was late by a few minutes for the prayer meeting on the grounds of Birla House, New Delhi, because he had been held up a little beyond the schedule by a meeting with Vallabhbhai Patel. With his forearms on the shoulders of his grandnieces, Abha and Manubehn, he walked briskly to the prayer ground where about 500 persons had gathered. He raised his hands and joined them to greet the congregation who returned the greeting in a similar manner. Just at that moment Nathuram Vinayak Godse pushed his way past Manubehn, whipped out a pistol and fired three shots. Mahatma Gandhi fell instantly with the words *He Ram* (O God!) on his lips.

past years and months, and this poison has had effect on people's minds. We must face this poison, we must root out this poison, and we must face all the perils that encompass us, and face them, not madly or badly, but rather in the way that our beloved teacher taught us to face them. The first thing to remember now is that none of us dare misbehave because we are angry. We have to behave like strong, determined people, determined to face all the perils that surround us, determined to carry out the mandate that our great teacher and our great leader has given us, remembering always that if, as I believe, his spirit looks upon us and sees us, nothing would displease his soul so much as to see that we have indulged in unseemly behaviour or in violence. So we must not do that. But that does not mean that we should be weak, but rather that we should, in strength and in unity, face all the troubles that are in front of us. We must hold together, and all our petty troubles and difficulties and conflicts must be ended in the face of this great disaster. A great disaster is a symbol to us to remember all the big things of life and forget the small things of which we have thought too much. Now the time has come again. As in his life, so in his death he has reminded us of the big things of life, the living truth, and if we remember that, then it will be well with us and well with India. . . .

. . . The greatest prayer that we can offer is to take a pledge to dedicate ourselves to the truth and to the cause for which this great countryman of ours lived and for which he has died. That is the best prayer that we can offer him and his memory. That is the best prayer that we can offer to India and ourselves. *Jai Hind.*

16

On the Death of Gandhi[1]

Resolution I

Sudden and overwhelming tragedy has befallen India and the world. On January 30, shortly after 5 p.m., the foul hand of an assassin ended a life of supreme value to humanity, a life round which had revolved India's destiny for half a century. Mahatma Gandhi, Father of the Nation and beloved of his people, apostle of nonviolence, saint and prophet of peace, great soldier for freedom and lover, above all, of the lowly, the humble and the oppressed, perished while on his way to prayer to which his fellow-countrymen flocked every evening to listen to his message. The evening sun set in mourning over a nation's tragedy.

The last great act of Gandhiji was his decision to sacrifice his life to bring about peace and harmony among the people of India. On Sunday, January 18, he terminated his fast on a solemn pledge being taken on behalf of the people, and India heaved a sigh of relief.

The greatest and noblest of India's sons has passed and the world mourns him and pays homage to his mighty achievements and the splendour of his spirit. Overwhelmed by sorrow, the Government of India still think with pride and thankfulness of their great leader, who has been an inspiration to hundreds of millions of people and has taught them the path of high endeavour and right action. In death as in life he was smiling, serene and full of love for all, the very embodiment of his message of truth and ahimsa. His life was one long struggle for justice and tolerance between man and man.

The Government of India, in paying reverent homage to the glorious memory of Mahatma Gandhi, declare their determination to strive to the utmost to fulfil his great message. To him the call of duty was paramount and duty demands of the Indian people today courage, vision and faith, and the pursuit of truth and the practice of tolerance. They urge upon their countrymen to remember, even in this hour of national bereavement, this duty and to face the future with stout hearts and steady gaze. They must assist the Government to

[1] Drafted by Jawaharlal Nehru, 2 February 1948. The Government of India brought out a black-bordered *Gazatte Extraordinary* in which the two resolutions were published.

fight the dark forces of evil and violence that are at work in our midst and that have succeeded in putting an end to the most precious treasure that India possessed. But even this act has only heightened the splendour of his spirit which shines today and will always shine upon the Indian people and humanity. As in life, so now that great spirit will guard and guide India which he loved so passionately and served so unceasingly and with such devotion. India and India's message were embodied in his own magnificent self. Let us, therefore, be true to Gandhiji and to India and strive our utmost to realize the India of his dreams.

Resolution II

The manner of Mahatma Gandhi's death is a grim and urgent reminder of the forces of hate and violence that are at work in our country and which imperil the freedom of the nation and darken her fair name. These forces must be swiftly controlled and rooted out. Only thus can India proceed along her appointed path and fulfil her destiny. Success in this endeavour demands the willing help of her people. Government have no doubt that the great majority of the Indian people demand that this action be taken and this duty performed. Government will, therefore, act with determination and justice and they trust that the people while offering their cooperation will not take the law into their own hands.

There is no place today in India for any organization preaching violence or communal hatred. No such organization will, therefore, be tolerated. No private armies will be permitted. Government calls upon all citizens, and particularly those serving Government in any capacity, to abide by these standards of behaviour and to act strictly in accordance with the declared policy of Government in this respect.

17

A Glory that is No More[1]

Sir, may I associate myself with what you have said?[2] It is customary in this House to pay some tribute to the eminent departed, to say some words of praise and condolence. I am not quite sure in my own mind if it is exactly fitting for me or for any others of this House to say much on this occasion, for I have a sense of utter shame both as an individual and as the head of the Government of India that we should have failed to protect the greatest treasure that we possessed. It is our failure, as it has been our failure in the many months past, to give protection to many an innocent man, woman and child; it may be that the burden and the task was too great for us or for any Government. Nevertheless, it is a failure. And today the fact that this mighty person whom we honoured and loved beyond measure has gone because we could not give him adequate protection is a shame for all of us. It is a shame to me as an Indian that an Indian should have raised his hand against him, it is a shame to me as a Hindu that a Hindu should have done this deed and done it to the greatest Indian of the day and the greatest Hindu of the age.

We praise people in well-chosen words and we have some kind of a measure for greatness. How shall we praise him and how shall we measure him, because he was not of the common clay that all of us are made of? He came, lived a fairly long span of life, and has passed away. No words of praise of ours in this House are needed, for he has had greater praise in his life than any living man in history. And during these two or three days since his death he has had the homage of the world; what can we add to that? How can we praise him, how can we who have been children of his, and perhaps more intimately his children than the children of his body, for we have all been in some greater or smaller measure the children of his spirit, unworthy as we were?

A glory has departed and the sun that warmed and brightened our lives has set and we shiver in the cold and dark. Yet he would not have us feel this way.

[1] Speech in the Constituent Assembly (Legislative), 2 February 1948. *Constituent Assembly of India (Legislative) Debates, Official Report,* Vol. I, 1948, pp. 102–4.

[2] The Speaker, G.V. Mavalankar, had said that Mahatma Gandhi had been a parent to all and they mourned the loss of his guidance.

After all, that glory that we saw for all these years, that man with the divine fire, changed us also—and such as we are, we have been moulded by him during these years; and out of that divine fire many of us also took a small spark which strengthened and made us work to some extent on the lines that he fashioned. And so if we praise him, our words seem rather small, and if we praise him, to some extent we also praise ourselves. Great men and eminent men have monuments in bronze and marble set up for them, but this man of divine fire managed in his life-time to become enshrined in millions and millions of hearts so that all of us became somewhat of the stuff that he was made of, though to an infinitely lesser degree. He spread out in this way all over India, not in palaces only, or in select places or in assemblies, but in every hamlet and hut of the lowly and those who suffer. He lives in the hearts of millions and he will live for immemorial ages.

What then can we say about him except to feel humble on this occasion? To praise him we are not worthy—to praise him whom we could not follow adequately and sufficiently. It is almost doing him an injustice just to pass him by with words when he demanded work and labour and sacrifice from us; in a large measure he made this country, during the last thirty years or more, attain to heights of sacrifice which in that particular domain have never been equalled elsewhere. He succeeded in that. Yet ultimately things happened which no doubt made him suffer tremendously though his tender face never lost its smile and he never spoke a harsh word to anyone. Yet, he must have suffered—suffered for the failing of this generation whom he had trained, suffered because we went away from the path that he had shown us. And ultimately the hand of a child of his—for he, after all, is as much a child of his as any other Indian—a hand of that child of his struck him down.

Long ages afterwards history will judge of this period that we have passed through. It will judge of the successes and the failures. We are too near it to be proper judges and to understand what has happened and what has not happened. All we know is that there was a glory and that it is no more; all we know is that for the moment there is darkness, not so dark certainly, because when we look into our hearts we still find the living flame which he lighted there. And if those living flames exist, there will not be darkness in this land and we shall be able, with our effort, remembering him and following his path, to illumine this land again, small as we are, but still with the fire that he instilled into us.

He was perhaps the greatest symbol of the India of the past, and, may I say, of the India of the future, that we could have had. We stand on this perilous edge of the present between that past and the future to be, and we face all manner of perils and the greatest peril is sometimes the lack of faith which comes to us, the sense of frustration that comes to us, the sinking of the heart and of the spirit that comes to us when we see ideals go overboard, when we see

the great things that we talked about somehow pass into empty words and life takes a different course. Yet, I do believe that perhaps this period will pass soon enough.

Great as this man of God was in his life, he has been great in his death and I have not the shadow of a doubt that by his death he has served the great cause as he served it throughout his life. We mourn him; we shall always mourn him, because we are human and cannot forget our beloved Master. But I know that he would not like us to mourn him. No tears came to his eyes when his dearest and closest passed away—only a firm resolve to persevere, to serve the great cause that he had chosen. So he would chide us if we merely mourn. That is a poor way of doing homage to him. The only way is to express our determination, to pledge ourselves anew, to conduct ourselves in a befitting manner and to dedicate ourselves to the great task which he undertook and which he accomplished to such a large extent. So we have to work, we have to labour, we have to sacrifice and thus prove, to some extent at least, worthy followers of his.

It is clear, as you said, Sir, that this happening, this tragedy, is not merely an isolated act of a madman.[3] This comes out of a certain atmosphere of violence and hatred that has prevailed in this country for many months and years and more especially in the past few months. That atmosphere envelops us and surrounds us and if we are to serve the cause he put before us, we have to face this atmosphere, to combat it, to struggle against it and root out the evil of hatred and violence.

So far as this Government is concerned, I trust they will spare no means, spare no effort to tackle it, because if we do not do that, if we, in our weakness or for any other reason that we may consider adequate, do not adopt effective means to stop this violence, to stop this spreading of hatred by word of mouth or writing or act, then indeed we are not worthy of being in this Government; we are certainly not worthy of being his followers and we are not worthy of even saying words of praise for this great soul who has departed. So on this occasion or any other when we think of this great Master who has gone, let us always think of him in terms of work and labour and sacrifice, in terms of fighting evil wherever we see it, in terms of holding to the truth as he put it before us, and if we do so, however unworthy we may be, we shall at least have done our duty and paid proper homage to his spirit.

He has gone, and all over India there is a feeling of having been left desolate and forlorn. All of us sense that feeling, and I do not know when we shall be able to get rid of it, and yet together with that feeling there is also a feeling of proud thankfulness that it has been given to us of this generation to be

[3] The Speaker had said that mere condemnation of the terrorist act of a mad and misguided person was not enough. What every citizen had to ensure was that terrorism did not grow into a cult in the country.

associated with this mighty person. In ages to come, centuries and maybe millennia after us, people will think of this generation when this man of God trod on earth and will think of us who, however small, could also follow his path and tread the holy ground where his feet had been. Let us be worthy of him.

18

The Perfect Artist[1]

Nineteen-sixteen. Over thirty-two years ago. That was when I first saw Bapu, and an age has gone by since then. Inevitably one looks back and memories crowd in. What a strange period this has been in India's history and the story, with all its ups and downs and triumphs and defeats, has the quality of a ballad and a romance. Even our trivial lives were touched by a halo of romance, because we lived through this period and were actors, in greater or lesser degree, in the great drama of India.

This period has been full of wars and upheavals and stirring events all over the world. Yet events in India stand out in a distinctive outline because they were on an entirely different plane. If a person studied this period without knowing much of Bapu he would wonder how and why all this happened in India. It is difficult to explain it; it is even difficult to understand by the cold light of reason why each one of us behaved as he or she did. It sometimes happens that an individual or even a nation is swept away by some gust of emotion or feeling into a particular type of action, sometimes noble action, more often ignoble action. But that passion and feeling pass and individual soon returns to his normal levels of action and inaction.

The surprising thing about India during this period was not only that the country as a whole functioned on a high plane, but also that it functioned more or less continuously for a lengthy period on that plane. That indeed was a remarkable achievement. It cannot easily be explained or understood unless one looks upon the astonishing personality that moulded this period. Like a colossus he stands astride half a century of India's history, a colossus not of the body but of the mind and spirit.

We mourn for Bapu and feel orphaned. Looking back at his magnificent life, what is there to mourn for? Surely to very, very few human beings in history could it have been given to find so much fulfilment in their own lives. He was sad for failures and unhappy at not having raised India to greater heights. That sadness and unhappiness are easy to understand. Yet who dare say that his life was a failure? Whatever he touched he turned into something worthwhile and precious. Whatever he did yielded substantial results, though perhaps not as

[1] Written on 5 February 1948 and published in *Harijan*, 15 February 1948.

great as he hoped for. One carried away the impression that he could not really fail in anything that he attempted. According to the teachings of the *Gita*, he laboured dispassionately without caring too much for results, and so results came to him.

During his long life, full of hard work and activity and novel adventures out of the common rut, there is hardly any jarring note anywhere. All his manifold activities became progressively a symphony and every word he spoke and every gesture that he made fitted into this and so unconsciously he became the perfect artist for he had learnt the art of living, though the way of life he had adopted was very different from the world's way. It became apparent that the pursuit of truth and goodness leads among other things to this artistry in life.

As he grew older his body seemed to be just a vehicle for the mighty spirit within him. Almost one forgot the body as one listened to him or looked at him, and so where he sat became a temple and where he trod was hallowed ground.

Even in his death there was a magnificence and complete artistry. It was from every point of view a fitting climax to the man and to the life he had lived. Indeed, it heightened the lesson of his life. He died in the fullness of his powers, and, as he would no doubt have liked to die, at the moment of prayer. He died a martyr to the cause of unity to which he had always been devoted and for which he had worked unceasingly, more specially during the past year or more. He died suddenly as all men should wish to die. There was no fading away of the body or a long illness or the forgetfulness of the mind that comes with age. Why then should we grieve for him? Our memories of him will be of the Master, whose step was light to the end, whose smile was infectious and whose eyes were full of laughter. We shall associate no failing powers with him of body or mind. He lived and he died at the top of his strength and powers, leaving a picture in our minds and in the mind of the age that we live in that can never fade away.

That picture will not fade. But he did something much more than that, for he entered into the very stuff of our minds and spirits and changed them and moulded them. The Gandhi generation will pass away, but that stuff will remain and will affect each succeeding generation, for it has become a part of India's spirit. Just when we were growing poor in spirit in this country, Bapu came to enrich us and make us strong, and the strength he gave us was not for a moment or a day or a year but it was something added on to our national inheritance.

Bapu has done a giant's work for India and the world and even for our poor selves, and he has done it astonishingly well. And now it is our turn not to fail him or his memory but to carry on the work to the best of our ability and to fulfil the pledges we have so often taken.

19

The Final Pilgrimage[1]

The last journey has ended. The final pilgrimage has been made. For over fifty years Mahatma Gandhi wandered all over our great country from the Himalayas and the North West Frontier and the Brahmaputra in the north-east to Kanya-kumari in the far south. He visited every part of the country, not for pleasure but to understand and serve the people. Perhaps no other Indian has travelled so extensively in the country or got to know and served her people so well. And now his journey in this world is over, though we have still to go a long way. Some grieve over his passing away, and this is natural and proper. But why should we grieve? Do we grieve for him or for something else? In his life, as in his death, he lent a radiance to our country which will keep it always illumined. Why then should we grieve for him? Yes, we rather grieve for ourselves, for our own weaknesses, for the ill will in our hearts, for our conflicts with others. We have to remember that it was to remove all these that Mahatma Gandhi sacrificed his life. It was this problem which had gripped him during these last few months. We honour him not for his name alone, but for what he stood for, what he taught us, and especially what he died for. . . .

Our country gave birth to a great man. He shone like a beacon not only for our country but for the whole world. And yet he was done to death by one of our own brothers. How did this happen? You might think that it was an act of madness. But that does not explain this tragedy. It could only occur because a seed of poison had been sown in our hearts against one another—a poison of enmity and hatred—and such acts affected the country and affected so many of our people. Now it is our duty to put an end to this poison of hatred and ill will. If we have learnt anything from the Mahatma, we must bear no enmity towards any person. An individual is not our enemy. It is the poison within him that we must fight and root out. We are weak but Gandhiji's strength passed into us and we have acquired some stature, living in his shadow. In his reflected glory we seemed to have acquired some strength. But the real strength and glory were his and the path he showed was also his. We stumbled often enough and

[1] Speech at the immersion of Mahatma Gandhi's ashes at *Triveni*, the confluence of three rivers—Ganga, Jumna and Saraswati—at Allahabad, 12 February 1948. AIR tapes, NMML (Original in Hindi). Excerpts.

fell down in our attempts to tread that path and so could do some service to the country. . . .

He led our country to freedom and the world marvelled at the way he did it. But at the very moment of gaining our freedom we forgot his lesson. We were misled. We fought with one another and disgraced our country. . . .

This communal poison which keeps Hindus against Muslims and Muslims against Hindus or Sikhs, whether it springs from religious fervour or in the name of religion, it will end our freedom if we are not vigilant. . . .

This great tragedy has happened because many persons, including some in high places, have poisoned the atmosphere of this country of ours. It is the duty of the Government as well as the people to root out this poison. We have had our lesson at a terrible cost. Is there anyone amongst us now who will not pledge himself after Gandhiji's death to fulfil his mission—a mission for which the greatest man of our country, the greatest man in the world, has laid down his life?

20

Two Weeks of Sorrow and Searching[1]

Friends and Comrades,

Two weeks have passed since India and the world learnt of that tragedy which will shame India for ages to come. Two weeks of sorrow and searching of heart, and strong and dormant emotions rising in a flood of tears from millions of eyes. Would that those tears had washed away our weakness and littleness and made us a little worthy of the Master for whom we sorrow? Two weeks of homage and tribute from every corner of the globe, from kings and potentates and those in high authority to the common man everywhere, who instinctively looked to him as a friend, a comrade and a champion. The flood of emotion will tone down gradually as all such emotions do, though none of us can ever be the same as we were before, for he has entered in the very texture of our lives and minds. People talk of memorials to him, in statues of bronze or marble or pillars of stone, and thus they mock him and belie his message. What tribute shall we pay to him that he would have appreciated? He has shown us the way to live and the way to die and if we have not understood that lesson, it would be better that we raised no memorial to him, for the only fitting memorial is to follow reverently the path he showed us, and to do our duty in life and in death.

He was a Hindu and an Indian, the greatest in many generations, and he was proud of being a Hindu and an Indian. To him India was dear, because she had represented throughout the ages certain immutable truths. But though he was intensely religious and came to be called the Father of the Nation which he had liberated, yet no narrow religious or national bonds confined his spirit. And so he became the great internationalist, believing in the essential unity of men, the underlying unity of all religions, and the needs of humanity, and more specially devoting himself to the service of the poor, the distressed and the oppressed millions everywhere. His death brought more tributes than have been paid at the passing away of any other human being in history. Perhaps what would have pleased him best were the spontaneous tributes that came

[1] Broadcast from New Delhi, 14 February 1948. AIR tapes, NMML. Excerpts.

from the people of Pakistan.[2] On the morrow of the tragedy, all of us forgot for a while the bitterness that had crept in, the estrangement and conflict of those past months, and Gandhiji stood out as the beloved champion and leader of the people of India, of India as it was before partition cut up this living nation. What was his great power over the mind and heart of man due to? Ages to come will judge and we are too near him to assess the many facets of his extraordinarily rich personality. But even we realize that his dominating passion was truth. That truth led him to proclaim, without ceasing, that good ends can never be attained by evil methods, that the end itself is distorted if the method pursued is bad. That truth led him to confess publicly whenever he thought he had made a mistake—Himalayan errors he called some of his own mistakes. That truth led him to fight evil and untruth wherever he found them regardless of the consequences. That truth made the service of the poor and the dispossessed the passion of his life, for where there is inequality and discrimination and suppression, there is injustice and evil and untruth. And thus he became the beloved of all those who have suffered from social and political evils, and the great representative of humanity as it should be. Because of that truth in him, wherever he sat that place became a temple and where he trod it became a hallowed ground.

His physical body has left us and we shall never see him again or hear his gentle voice or run to him for counsel. But this imperishable memory and immortal message remain with us. How can we honour them and live up to them? He was the great unifier in India, who taught us not only a bare tolerance of others but a willing acceptance of them as our friends and comrades in common undertakings. He taught us to rise above our little selves and prejudices and see the good in others. His last few months and his very death symbolize to us this message of large-hearted tolerance and unity. A little before he died we pledged ourselves to this before him. We must keep that pledge and remember that India is a common home to all those who live here, to whatever religion they may belong. They are equal sharers in our great inheritance and they have equal rights and obligations. Ours is a composite nation, as all great nations must necessarily be. Any narrowness in outlook, any attempt to confine the bounds of this great nation, will be a betrayal of his final lesson to us and will surely lead to disaster and to the loss of that freedom, for which he laboured and which he gained for us in large measure.

Equally important is the service of the common man in India who has suffered so much in the past. His claims must be paramount and everything that comes in the way of his betterment must have a second place. Nor merely on

[2] At a meeting on 31 January in Karachi, about 25,000 Muslims mourned the death of Mahatma Gandhi. Major Yusuf Ismail, President of the Pakistan Islamic Council Conference, and other prominent leaders paid tributes. The Government of Pakistan brought out a special gazette with black borders.

moral and humanitarian grounds but also from the point of view of political commonsense, has it become essential to raise the standard of the common man and to give him full opportunity of progress. A social structure which denies him this opportunity stands self-condemned and must be changed.

Gandhiji has gone, though his flaming spirit envelops us. The burden is upon us now and the immediate need is that we should endeavour to the utmost of our ability to discharge that burden. We have to hold together and fight that terrible poison of communalism that has killed the greatest man of our age. We must root this out not in any spirit of ill-will to misguided individuals, but in militant opposition to the evil itself, wherever it may be. That evil has not ended with the killing of Gandhiji. It was an even more shameful thing for some people to celebrate this killing in various ways. Those who did so or feel that way have forfeited their right to be called Indians.

21

Bapu's Message[1]

Friends and comrades,

What shall I say to you on this day which is especially dedicated to the memory of him whom we call the Father of the Nation. I shall not speak to you today as Prime Minister of India, but as Jawaharlal, a pilgrim like you in India's long journey to freedom, and one whose high privilege it was to learn the service of India and of truth at the feet of the Master. . . . I would like to speak about those basic things which Gandhiji taught us and without which life would be superficial and empty.

He taught us the love of truth and straight dealing, not only in our individual life but also in public affairs and in the intercourse of nations. He taught us the dignity of man and of man's labour. He repeated the old lesson that out of hatred and violence, nothing but hatred and violence and destruction can result. And so, he taught us the way of fearlessness, of unity, of tolerance and of peace.

How far have we lived up to this teaching? Not very far, I fear, and yet we learnt much, and under his guidance we achieved our country's freedom by peaceful methods. But at the very moment of deliverance, we became forgetful and strayed into evil ways, causing infinite pain to that great heart which throbbed continuously for India and for the great truths that India has embodied through ages past.

What of today? When we remember him and praise him and sometimes childishly talk of putting up his statues, do we give thought to the great message for which he lived and died? I fear all of us are still very far from living up to that message. But I do believe that the great forces that he set in motion are working silently, but powerfully, to move India in the direction he had desired. There are other forces also, forces of disruption and untruth, violence and narrow-mindedness, which work in the opposite direction. Between the two there is an unceasing conflict, as between the forces of good and evil, there is conflict all over the world. If we honour the memory of Gandhiji, we must do so actively, by working ceaselessly for the causes he represented.

[1] Broadcast from All India Radio, Delhi on 2 October 1948 at 8.30 p.m. AIR tapes, NMML, SWJN, Vol. 7 (II series), pp. 150–2. Excerpts.

I am proud of my country, proud of my national inheritance and proud of many things. But I speak to you not in pride, but with all humility. For events have humbled me, and often shamed me, and the dream of India that I have had has sometimes grown dim. I have loved India and sought to serve her, not because of her geographical magnitude, not even because she was great in the past, but because of my faith in her today, and my belief that she will stand for truth and freedom, and the higher things of life.

Do you want India to stand for these great aims and ideals which Gandhiji placed before us? If so then you will have to think and act in accordance with them, and not allow yourself to be carried away by the passion of the moment or by thoughts of petty advantage. You will have to root out every tendency that weakens the nation, whether it is communalism, separatism, religious bigotry, provincialism or class arrogance.

We have said repeatedly that we will not tolerate any communalism in this country, and that we are building a free secular state, where every religion and belief has full freedom and equal honour, where every citizen has equal liberty and equal opportunity. In spite of this some people still talk in a language which smacks of communalism and separatism. I want to tell you that I am entirely opposed to this, and I expect you likewise to oppose it, with all your might, if you have faith in Gandhiji's teachings.

Another evil is that of provincialism, and of that we see a great deal today, running riot and forgetting the larger issues. That also has to be opposed and combated.

Some people have recently called India an aggressor nation. I can only say that they spoke out of ignorance. If India took to the ways of aggression against any other nation, there would be no place left for me, and for many of my colleagues in the Government of India. If we indulged in aggression, we should be false to all that we have stood for and all that Gandhiji taught us. . . .

Whatever may happen in other countries, let us remain calm, and let us try to remain true to Gandhiji's teachings. If we keep faith with him, we shall keep faith with ourselves and with India and, all will be well with this country, so dear to us. *Jai Hind.*

22

The Legend[1]

Nearly three -and-a-half years have gone by since Gandhiji passed away. The manner of his death was the culmination and perfect climax to an astonishing career. Even during his life innumerable stories and legends had grown around him, and now he seems almost a legendary figure, one in the great line of India's sages and heroes and wise men. A new generation grows up to whom he is almost a name, a great name to be revered, but nevertheless a name. Within a few more years there will not be many left who have come in personal contact with him and had experience of that vivid, virile and magnificent personality. The legend will grow and take many shapes, sometimes with little truth in it. Succeeding generations will remember him and pay honour to him. As is India's way, we shall add him to our pantheon and celebrate the day of his birth and the day of his passing away. We shall shout *Jai* when his name is mentioned and perhaps feel a little elated in the process and that we have done our duty of him.

What gods there are, I know not and am not concerned about them. But there are certain rare qualities which raise a man above the common herd and appear to make him as made of different clay. The long story of humanity can be considered from many points of view; it is a story of the advance and growth of man and the spirit of man, it is also a story full of agony and tragedy. It is a story of masses of men and women in ferment and in movement, and it is also the story of great and outstanding personalities who have given content and shape to that movement of masses.

In that story Gandhi occupies and will occupy a pre-eminent place. We are too near him to judge him correctly. Some of us came into intimate contact with him and were influenced by that dominating and very lovable personality. We miss him terribly now for he had become a part of our own lives. With us the personal factor is so strong that it comes in the way of a correct appraisal. Others, who did not know him so intimately, cannot perhaps have full realization of the living fire that was in this man of peace and humility. So both these groups lack proper perspective or knowledge. Whether that perspective will come in later years when the problems and conflicts of today are matters for the

[1] 30 June 1951, foreword to D.G. Tendulkar's book, *Mahatma*, in eight volumes (The Publications Division, Government of India, August 1951). Excerpts.

historian, I do not know. But I have no doubt that in the distant, as in the near future, this towering personality will stand out and compel homage. It may be that the message which he embodied will be understood and acted upon more in later years than it is today. That message was not confined to a particular country or a community. Whatever truth there was in it was a truth applicable to all countries and to humanity as a whole. He may have stressed certain aspects of it in relation to the India of his day, and those particular aspects may cease to have much significance as times and conditions change. The kernel of that message was, however, not confined to time or space. And if this is so, then it will endure and grow in the understanding of man.

He brought freedom to India and in that process he taught us many things which were important for us at the moment. He told us to shed fear and hatred, and of unity and equality and brotherhood, and of raising those who had been suppressed, and of the dignity of labour and of the supremacy of things of the spirit. Above all, he spoke and wrote unceasingly of Truth in relation to all our activities. He repeated that Truth was to him God and God was Truth. Scholars may raise their eyebrows, and philosophers and cynics repeat the old question: what is Truth? Few of us dare to answer that question with any assurance and it may be that the answer itself is many-sided and our limited intelligence cannot grasp the whole. But, however limited the functioning of our minds may be or our capacity for intuition, each one of us must, I suppose, have some limited idea of truth, as he sees it. Will he act up to it, regardless of consequences, and not compromise with what he himself considers an aberration from it? Will he even in search of a right goal compromise with the means to attain it? Will he subordinate means to ends?

It is easy to frame this question, rather rhetorically, as if there was only one answer. But life is terribly complicated and the choices it offers are never simple. Perhaps, to some extent, an individual, leading his individual and rather isolated life, may endeavour with some success to answer that question for himself. But where he is concerned not only with his own action but with those of many others, when fate or circumstance has put him in a position of moulding and directing others, what then is he to do? How is a leader of men to function? If he is a leader, he must lead and not merely follow the dictates of the crowd, though some modern conceptions of the functioning of democracy would lead one to think that he must bow down to the largest number. If he does so, then he is no leader and he cannot take others far along the right path of human progress. If he acts singly, according to his own lights, he cuts himself off from the very persons whom he is trying to lead. If he brings himself down to the same level of understanding as others, then he has lowered himself, been untrue to his own ideal, and compromised that truth. And once such compromises begin, there is no end to them and the path is slippery. What then is he to do? It is not enough for him to perceive truth or some aspect of it. He must succeed in making others perceive it also.

The average leader of men, especially in a democratic society, has continually to adapt himself to his environment and to choose what he considers the lesser evil. Some adaptation is inevitable. But as this process goes on, occasions arise when that adaptation imperils the basic ideal and objective. I suppose there is no clear answer to this question and each individual and each generation will have to find its own answer.

The amazing thing about Gandhi was that he adhered, in all its fullness, to his ideals, his conception of truth, and yet he did succeed in moulding and moving enormous masses of human beings. He was not inflexible. He was very much alive to the necessities of the moment, and he adapted himself to changing circumstances. But all these adaptations were about secondary matters. In regard to the basic things he was inflexible and firm as a rock. There was no compromise in him with what he considered evil. He moulded a whole generation and more and raised them above themselves, for the time being at least. That was a tremendous achievement.

Does that achievement endure? It brought results which undoubtedly endure. And yet it brings some reaction in its train also. For people, compelled by some circumstance, to raise themselves above their normal level, are apt to sink back even to a lower level than previously. We see today something like that happening. We saw that reaction in the tragedy of Gandhi's own assassination. What is worse is the general lowering of standards, when Gandhi's whole life was devoted to the raising of these very standards. Perhaps this is a temporary phase and people will recover from it and find themselves again. I have no doubt that, deep in the consciousness of India, the basic teachings of Gandhi will endure and will affect our national life. . . .

We live today in a world torn with hatred and violence and fear and passion, and the shadow of war hangs heavily over us all. Gandhi told us to cast away our fear and passion and to keep away from hatred and violence. His voice may not be heard by many in the tumult and shouting of today, but it will have to be heard and understood some time or other, if this world is to survive in any civilized form.

People will write the life of Gandhi and they will discuss and criticize him and his theories and activities. But to some of us he will remain something apart from theory—a radiant and beloved figure who ennobled and gave some significance to our petty lives, and whose passing away has left us with a feeling of emptiness and loneliness. Many pictures rise in my mind of this man, whose eyes were often full of laughter and yet were pools of infinite sadness. But the picture that is dominant and most significant is as I saw him marching, staff in hand, to Dandi on the Salt March in 1930. Here was the pilgrim on his quest of Truth, peaceful, determined and fearless, who would continue that quest and pilgrimage, regardless of consequences.

23

Gandhian Method[1]

We must look to the future and work for it purposively and with faith and vigour, at the same time we must keep our past inheritance and derive sustenance from it. Change is essential, but continuity is also necessary. The future has to be built on the foundations laid in the past and the present. To deny the past and break with it completely is to uproot ourselves and, sapless, dry up. It was the virtue of Gandhiji to keep his feet firmly planted in the rich traditions of our race and our soil and, at the same time, to function on the revolutionary plane. Many criticized him for what they called his acceptance of out-of-date economic theories or for his supporting some kind of traditionalism or even encouraging reactionary forces, and yet, any one who examines the broad sweep of his activities is overwhelmed by their revolutionary consequences. Whether we look at them in the political or the social field, we find some difficulty in recognizing this because we have been brought up in the western traditions of conflict. He knew that a true revolution comes from the people and not at the top, and that revolution must be essentially social. Many eminent social reformers came before him and succeeded in bringing about some minor changes or building up a new sect, but Gandhiji, talking in terms of *Rama Rajya*, brought revolution to millions of homes without people realizing fully what was happening. He seldom condemned caste us a whole (though in his later days he did so to some extent), but by his insistence on the uplift of the Depressed Classes and the Untouchables, he undermined the entire caste system, and he did so deliberately knowing the consequences. By his technique of political action, he vitalized hundreds of millions of people, drove out fear from them, and produced in them self-respect and self-reliance. By his stress on the under-privileged and poverty-stricken, he forced all of us to think in terms of social justice. He did all this calmly and dispassionately avoiding, to a large extent, a sense of conflict. Above all, he laid stress on truth and peaceful means. Indeed, truth become a condition of living for him, and his dynamic action was allied always to truth. In doing so, he revived memories in our people of the basic principles which had enriched our race in the past. Thus he built on old foundations, and at the same time, oriented the structure towards the future.

[1] Article in *AICC Economic Review*, Vol. X, No. 22, 15 March 1959. Excerpts.

The fact that some of his economic of other approaches did not fit in with modern ideas or had only some temporary significance did not trouble him. He was always prepared to adapt himself to changing conditions, provided the base was sound.

It has always seemed to me remarkable how he could link the past with the present and even the future. And because he could do so, he could make his people advance step by step without a break, and also avoid conflict to a considerable extent. The most vital lesson that he taught us or made us remember afresh, was the importance of means. Ends were never enough by themselves for the ends were shaped by the means that led to them. If there is any basic truth in this principle and in his method of working, then we also have to build on the foundations he laid down. That does not mean a slavish following of everything that he said or did, which might have been suitable at one stage of our existence and is no longer appropriate today. We have also to adapt ourselves to changing circumstances, but the basic principles must continue to guide us.

VII

India and Britain

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1

The Psychology of Indian Nationalism[1]

More than two decades ago a great Indian, Mr. G.K. Gokhale, whose life was consecrated to the service of his motherland, founded an association called the Servants of India Society. In the rules of this association Mr. Gokhale referred with gentle irony to the inscrutable wisdom of Providence, which had joined the destinies of India and England. Inscrutable indeed was this dispensation which brought together in the relation of rulers and ruled two races and peoples so dissimilar and so little capable of understanding each other. Perhaps a healthy contact between the two types would have done good to both by humanizing them more and toning down their angularities. But there is little of health, where an alien race governs another, however good the intentions might be. Cooperation to be productive of good must be the cooperation of equals, not that miscalled cooperation which is based on the masterfulness of the rulers and the servility of the ruled.

And so we have the extraordinary fact that after a century and half of British rule in India, the two races are as apart from each other as ever, and today each views the other with resentment and hostility. The Indian being the underdog has at least tried to understand the psychology of his rulers, not with great success it must be admitted, for passion and lack of sympathy make it difficult to appreciate another. But the English have not had even this inducement and the average Englishman is singularly incapable of appreciating, or even trying to appreciate a viewpoint different from his own. India is to him but a part of the mysterious and effete East, which always plots and intrigues most irrationally against the God-ordained might and majesty of England, and ungratefully forgets the many favours which England has bestowed on her. Has not England given India the railways, the telegraph and the telephone and established the Pax Britannica? It does not occur to him that there are other things, of the mind and the spirit, not to mention material good, more vital than railways and the like, and India may not have fared well in regard to them. Nor does it occur to him that other countries even in the East have developed railways and the

[1] Article in *The Review of Nations*, Vol. I, No. 1, published in Geneva, January 1927.

telegraph and the telephone without England's help, and perhaps India also might have done so if Providence in its inscrutable wisdom had not thrust England on her. And peace is good, but even the terrors and the misery of the battlefield are better than the peace of the graveyard.

A little imagination, some fellow-feeling, and less of self-complacency and smug unctuousness would have gone a long way to solve the problem of India to the mutual advantage of both English and India. Unhappily the necessary qualities have been wholly lacking and the problem will solve itself in its own way, but this way may bring, as it has already done, a great deal of suffering to India and some unpleasant surprises to England.

That India desires to control her own affairs and to regain her lost dignity is natural enough and requires no explanation or justification. The psychology of Indian nationalism is fundamentally the same as that of any other nation striving to rid itself of alien domination. But perhaps it is worthwhile to enquire how the nationalist movement in India took its present shape and gathered the impetus which it has had in recent years. To an outsider India appears today to be rent with faction and strife—the Hindu and Muslim fighting, and various political parties bitterly opposing each other. This is largely true, and yet the dominant fact remains that almost every thinking Indian is thoroughly distrustful of England and desirous of getting rid of her rule. Never before was there so much and such widespread hostility to British rule and want of faith in the bona fides of the English. Every political party of any standing and even the great communal organizations have declared that India must have responsible government. Some people want independence, while others lay stress on dominion rule, knowing well that a thin line divides the two. The methods of political parties differ and they may quarrel among themselves about achieving their goal, but the fact remains that in essentials the goal of all is the same.

An individual or country in adversity always looks back to its more prosperous days and usually magnifies them. The Indian of today is no exception to this and not without reason he can feel and express pride for many of the achievements of his ancestors. It is necessary thus to look back on Indian history to understand the mentality of new India. This will also help us to see what truth there is in the oft-repeated charge that India has never been a nation and was always a prey to anarchy and invasion till the British came.

The modern idea of nationhood is of recent growth even in the West and India in the past certainly was not, and is not even now wholly, a nation like France or England is today. It was too vast a country to develop on those lines before the advent of modern methods of communication. But even in the remote past there has always been a fundamental unity of India—a unity of a common faith and culture. India was *Bharata*, the holy land of the Hindus, and it is not without significance that the great places of Hindu pilgrimage are situated in the four corners of India—the extreme south overlooking Ceylon, the

extreme west washed by the Arabian Sea, the east facing the Bay of Bengal and the north in the Himalayas. Sanskrit was the language of the learned throughout the length and breadth of the country and the provincial languages in the north were all derived from Sanskrit and were closely allied, the four principal southern languages being greatly influenced by Sanskrit.* Every resident of the country felt a certain kinship with all others who lived in the great sub-continent, and those who came from outside India were the foreigners, the barbarians. Nonetheless India was not a modern nation. It was a group of close--ly allied people with a common culture and religion. There were usually separate kingdoms and occasionally a powerful ruler brought most of them under one imperial sway. It must not be forgotten that Asoka the Great had an empire greater in extent than the present British Indian Empire, and subsequently the great Gupta Dynasty ruled for many generations over a vast empire which comprised the whole of northern and central India. The Mughal Empire of later times is well-known. India by reason of her size must be compared to the whole of western and central and southern Europe and in this comparison it will be seen that India had right through the ancient and mediaeval period far more peace and orderly government than Europe. The coming of the Muslims brought a foreign element into India but they came in comparatively small numbers and they did not disturb the culture and the institutions of the country. These institutions were partly influenced by them but on the whole they adapted themselves to them. One fact is noteworthy. During all the troubles and invasions the village system of local self-government endured and was little affected.

The gradual disintegration and fall of the Mughal Empire produced unstable conditions in India and there was a period of internecine conflict. This was peculiarly favourable to foreign adventurers and the English took full advantage of it and gradually, by playing off one ruler against the other, established their sway.

It is not possible to mention here the achievements in art and literature and thought and even the science of government during the Hindu and Muslim periods. But they should be borne in mind to understand the Indian's pride in his past and his contemptuous rejection of the British claim that they rescued India from anarchy and barbarism.

This, in briefest outline, is the picture of the past which the Indian has in his mind. Very naturally he exaggerates the good in it and forgets the bad. But making all allowance, the past of India has a great deal worthy of a great country and compares very favourably with the squabbles and incessant conflicts of the

*The notion that India has hundreds of languages is, like most other notions about her, entirely based on the lively imagination of some persons and has no basis in fact. India has a dozen languages, one of which—Hindustani—is spoken by about a third of her entire population and is understood by a great part of the rest.

little countries of Europe. She fell an easy prey to the conquerors from the West owing undoubtedly to decadence and want of cohesion and specially to her not having made sufficient progress in the science of war.

The British came to India as adventurers and freebooters and their first period was admittedly a predatory one. Enormous sums of money were taken out of India and individual Englishmen—the "nababs" as they were called in those days—made vast fortunes. This was immediately followed by a more systematized method of extortion. The chief object was to fill the coffers of the East India Company to enable it to pay heavy dividends to its shareholders and to increase British trade with India. It is well-known that the most cruel and unscrupulous methods were adopted to kill flourishing Indian industries in order to find a market for Lancashire goods. Duties ranging up to 120 per cent were put on Indian stuffs imported into England and it was even made an offence in England to wear some Indian cloths. With the coming of the British and the development of the sea routes India also lost touch with her Asiatic neighbours, and thus the foreign trade of India was crushed. The British authorities then turned their attention to the internal trade and imposed all manner of heavy transit and other duties which made it very difficult to send Indian goods from one part of the country to another. Meanwhile Lancashire goods had free and easy access to the Indian market, and so gradually the great Indian cottage industries were annihilated, and Lancashire cotton and other English goods had a free field. The result of all these measures was to make millions unemployed and to throw them on the land. But the land tax was heavy and was continually being increased at periodical assessments. The people became more and more impoverished while at the same time a stream of money went to enrich the East India Company and the manufacturers in England.

The third period saw the gradual consolidation and extension of British rule. In all departments which strengthened the hold of the Government or brought in revenue, efficiency was shown but little was done for the people. Pious professions of bringing enlightenment to the heathen were frequent enough but the chief consideration was dividends. An attempt was made to start education on western lines. The old village schools, which were widespread, died out as did the system of village self-government. The few schools and colleges started to give western education only effected an infinitesimal number of persons and their main object was to train clerks for British offices and departments of government. This period came to a sudden end with the great Mutiny in 1857.

As usual the English knew little and cared less for what the people were thinking and feeling. Resentment and hostility against the policy and methods of the English were growing all round but they did not notice them. Ultimately a spark started a great conflagration. There can be no doubt that the Mutiny, as it is called by English writers, was a national rising against the British, and if by any chance it had succeeded, it would have been a war of independence.

But patriots who fail are dubbed traitors and suffer the fate of traitors. Unhappily the mutineers committed barbarities and excesses of the worst kind. But the East India Company was even more atrocious and the memory of that nightmare of horror lingers. The rising was suppressed and the people cowed down. An Arms Act was passed depriving them of their arms and India was administered by the British Parliament direct and not by the East India Company.

The subsequent period was a quiet one and many administrative reforms were introduced by the British. A number of able administrators perfected the bureaucratic system of government, and the Indian Civil Service became a highly organized and powerful body of men, often actuated by good intentions for the people, so long as these intentions did not interfere with their own powers and privileges or touch the basis of British rule or injure British commerce. The control of the British Parliament was nominal and the Indian Civil Service which was until quite recently entirely recruited in England, had complete control over the destinies of India, the people of India having no place or power in government. Viceroys came and went and seldom succeeded in doing anything against the wishes of the I.C.S. Such of them, as Lord Ripon, who tried to go counter to the I.C.S. were soon brought to book. It was natural that a close corporation like the I.C.S. uncontrolled either by Indian public opinion or by the British Parliament, should become more and more imbued with a sense of its own virtues and intolerant of all criticism and opposition. Like little Olympians, cut of from the world of suffering humanity, they sat on their mountain tops or in their offices, infallible and unapproachable except to such as brought them votive offerings of flattery and servility. All wisdom lay in them and the gift to probe the hearts of the millions committed to their charge, and finding, without any reference to them, what was good for them and what was not. And the luckless person who dared to question this wisdom was guilty of the deadliest of sins.

Nearly thirty years after the Mutiny, as the memory of its horrors receded, the new nationalism began to find fresh expression and the Indian National Congress was founded. This was at first entirely confined to the English educated few and it was a very moderate body, asking in the most respectful of language for trivial reforms. Gradually it gained strength, but for long it continued to represent the moderate nationalist. Early in the 20th century the nationalist movement gathered head and some of the measures of the government, among which the most important was the partition of the province of Bengal, fanned the flames of nationalism and hostility to England. For the first time in recent history a great political leader, Tilak,[2] who had influence not only amongst the English educated but with large masses of his countrymen, arose, and in Bengal and the West of India the people were greatly stirred. A

[2] B.G. Tilak (1856–1920). Leader of the extremists in the Congress and sentenced to several terms of imprisonment.

movement for the boycott of British goods was started and it achieved considerable success. In Bengal and elsewhere terrorist crime took place and the British Government tried to meet the situation by deportations without trial and other repressive measures. In the Congress itself there was a conflict between the moderate and advanced sections which ultimately had to break between the two and the extremists left the Congress. Tilak was sent to jail for a long period and the Bengal agitation came to an end by the annulment of the partition of Bengal. The result of the new methods of agitation was also the introduction of some reforms in the government whereby Indians were given councils without any powers. These reforms were introduced, as has indeed been admitted, to divide the two wings of the nationalist party and they succeeded admirably in doing so. During the Great War British statesmen were lavish in their promises to India and many hopes were built on them. But even during the continuation of the war various incidents, including the press gang methods of recruitment in the Punjab, went a long way to intensify resentment against England, and a feeling that British promises were not likely to be kept, started a vigorous agitation for Home Rule, as it was then called. This bore fruit in the announcement made on behalf of the British Parliament that responsible government was the goal of British policy in India and this was followed by the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme of reforms. But reforms delayed fall far short of expectations and seldom satisfy, and the demand for greater power and freedom, the more it is repressed the more it increases. The new scheme, which from an Englishman's point of view went far, fell flat and was bitterly criticized by the Indian Congress.

Meanwhile strange things were happening and the mind of India was vastly exercised and agitated. The close of the war brought to her not the freedom she longed for but Rowlatt Bills which were ostensibly aimed at suppressing revolutionary violence but which in reality gave great powers to the police and the executive to suppress political activity by arrest and detention without trial. The reaction in the country was tremendous and every shade of opinion was ranged against this law, but in spite of this unanimous opposition the bills were passed by the Government. This brought a new force of tremendous import into Indian politics. Mr. Gandhi, already widely known and respected on account of his great fight in South Africa for the rights of the Indians domiciled there, came forward with a novel weapon of peaceful satyagraha and civil disobedience. His temporary arrests led to riots in some places and then followed the martial law regime in the Punjab. The massacre in Amritsar by Dyer and his crawling order[3] and numerous atrocities perpetrated during this period by the Punjab officials drove the iron into the soul of India. India knew as never

[3] General Dyer had opened fire without warning on a large crowd and had ordered that Indians could only crawl on their stomachs along a street in which an English woman had been attacked.

before what British rule meant and what it rested upon, and curiously, instead of being terrorized as she had been after the Mutiny, the very horror of the Punjab gave fresh courage and made her resolve to put an end to conditions which could permit such happenings.

The treatment accorded to Turkey and the Khilafat by England was also greatly resented by the Muslims in India, and from the Punjab wrongs and the Khilafat was born noncooperation which took hold of India and permeated to the remotest villages and was probably the greatest movement which any country has had in recent times.

To examine this great movement with any thoroughness would require the consideration of many details and this is not possible here. Noncooperation essentially was a passionate protest against British dominion in India and its method of action was to withdraw peacefully all support from the British government. It was based on the admitted assumption that British rule cannot exist in India without the support and the exploitation of large numbers of the Indian people. It was something like Sinn Fein in Ireland, only it was wider and deeper. It was not, as a whole, an attack on western civilization or even English education. But it was felt that of all the injuries done by England to India—the destruction of her manufactures, the impoverishment of her people—the greatest injury was moral rather than physical. She had deliberately emasculated us and developed the slave mentality in us and made us feel powerless and unable to contend against her might. She had made us despise even the good that was in our culture and by a system of education, which taught us false or perverted history, had turned us into a nation of clerks and underlings. She had developed groups and classes of people—her army of subordinates in the government service, the people attached to her law courts, the merchants dealing in British goods, etc., whose subsistence was apparently bound up with the continuance of the British connection. So noncooperation struck at these strong ropes that tied us to Britain. The Councils were boycotted and so were the law courts; foreign cotton goods were not to be bought or sold and were to be replaced by the hand-spun and hand-woven product of our cottages and villages; the government schools were to be left, not because we were against education, but because the education that was given in them was anti-national. Later in the scheme were the boycott of government service, civil and military, and ultimately a refusal to pay taxes. And all this was to be done without any resort to violence. It was logically a perfect scheme and no government could withstand it. But it required a tremendous deal of self-sacrifice and forbearance.

The history of India during the years 1920 to 1922 shows the wonderful extent to which the people responded to this call. How enormous incomes were cheerfully given up and sufferings were willingly borne and how about 25,000 men and women went peacefully to jail. The movement met with greater success than could have been expected, but the removal of nearly all the leaders,

who were put in jail, and the ubiquitous presence of the agent provocateur led to a break up of discipline and to acts of violence which resulted in Mr. Gandhi and the Congress suspending the movement.

But noncooperation did not die, nor can it die. It has come to India to stay. The political movement took a different turn and the Congress decided to enter the Councils, not from any love of them but to carry on the fight there. And this fight inside the country continues and is likely to continue, although for the present it is clouded by internal dissensions.

Noncooperation, as has been said, roused up the masses of India. During the intensity of the struggle their attention was all in the fight but when the reaction came and success was delayed, the newly released energy went in wrong directions. There, still and at places stagnant waters could not be stirred up without unpleasant odours. Today this energy is turned inwards and helps in adding to mutual bitterness and strife. Indian politics appear to be dominated by the communal question, the antagonism said to exist between the Hindu and Muslim. There is no doubt that there is this antagonism today but there is also little doubt that much of it is the creation of interested parties. All who are acquainted with conditions know that England cannot hold India if the Hindu and the Moslem are together, and the strength of the noncooperation movement lay in this that they did act together. They also know that it has been the deliberate policy of the Government to play off one community against another. Officially this is of course denied but unofficially many even of the officials admit it. And such of us as have taken part in Indian politics know full well that at every turn we have to face the agent provocateur and even our national assemblies are full of the agents of the government's secret service. The responsibility of England for the communal situation in India is not a light one. Nonetheless no Indian will deny that ours is the primary responsibility and if we were not very much at fault no outsider could make us act in the foolish and criminal way we have done. And the solution will also come from us probably sooner than many expect.

India and China, though different in many ways, have much in common. China today is in a welter of civil war, the protégés and hirelings of foreign powers trying to suppress the nationalists and prevent the formation of a strong and independent state. But the victorious armies of Canton are going forward surely and steadily and every Indian rejoices at their success. India too may find the way to her goal through the present strife and faction. For it must be remembered that the long sleep of India is over, and if the waking is a troubled one, nonetheless the strength increases and as soon as the internal squabbles are adjusted, this energy and strength will all turn to the one goal which almost everyone in India desires.

Why does an Indian desire freedom for his country? Is it strange that he should do so? What is the present position in the so-called British Commonwealth of Nations? India is an original member of the League of Nations, but

the men who claim to represent her are nominated by the British Government and represent the Government alone. In this Imperial Conference she finds a place by courtesy and the noble gentleman[4] who has recently been "representing" her appeared to be overwhelmed in the high and distinguished company and all he could do was to express repeatedly his gratitude for being allowed to sit on the doorstep. In the British Dominions an Indian is treated as a pariah, and in South Africa especially, colour legislation has repeatedly humiliated him and made his lot terrible to bear. Even in parts of the Empire directly administered by the British Colonial Office, like Kenya, he is tolerated as an inferior being and not permitted to own property in the highlands which are the peculiar preserve of the few British settlers.

In his own country his lot is no better. He is cribbed and confined and has no opportunities for growth. All creative and artistic effort has largely died out of him under the uncongenial and stifling atmosphere and a third-rate literary education had made him fit only for the office stool. After 150 years or more of British rule the magnificent result is a bare 8 per cent of literates. There are no funds, so says the Government, for increasing education or more sanitation, or hospitals, or other nation-building services. For most of the revenue is swallowed up by an enormous expenditure on an army, one of whose chief purposes is to keep down turbulent nationalists. Indians are charged with being unable to undertake the defence of their country after a deliberate policy of depriving them of their arms and refusing to admit them, except recently in a very small measure, to commissioned ranks. Interminable enquires go on as to how further commissions can be given, but when it comes to increasing the pay of the Indian Civil Service, the highest paid service in the world, a Royal Commission is hurried through in the teeth of unanimous Indian protest and the pay is increased and free passage to England granted. Funds were not lacking for this.

If an Indian turns to commerce and industry he finds the policy of the British Government is always, and perhaps naturally, partial to British interests and firms. Highly inadequate arrangements exist in the country for imparting technical education and the Government of India did not even have a Department for Commerce and Industry till Lord Curzon's[5] time. The exchange and financial policy of government has admittedly done tremendous injury to Indian interests, the corresponding gain going to British firms. Till last year there was the unique spectacle of the Government of India taxing cotton goods manufactured in India itself. The cotton industry in India nearly broke down under this burden and ultimately the excise duty was removed.

In the Government of India, the Indian has little influence. The decisions

[4] At the Imperial Conference held in England in October 1926, the Maharaja of Burdwan was content to acknowledge and acquiesce in the inferior position given to him at the Conference.

[5] Viceroy of India, 1899–1905.

of the new Councils in vital matters are overridden or ignored by the Viceroy. The Viceroy and his Council have powers to initiate legislation or to certify any measure although the Legislative Assembly or Provincial Council may deliberately vote against it. In the Assembly the Swarajists adopted the old constitutional method of protest and voted down supplies but the Viceroy could and did forthwith reverse their decisions.

But the terrible fact which stares everyone in India is the appalling poverty of the people. India is not a country of gaily bedecked Maharajas displaying themselves and their jewels periodically in the West after the manner of star artistes of the cinema world as many people seem to imagine, but a grim land full of millions of poverty-stricken peasants and labourers for whom the next meal is always a problem, a problem which is often not solved. Competent observers have come to the conclusion that poverty has increased greatly since the coming of the British and is still increasing. But indeed statistics are hardly necessary to establish this for he who leaves the few towns with their thin veneer of activity and prosperity and goes deep into the villages, can see it for himself in the sunken eyes and the hopeless looks of the people. What will India be like in the future if this continues?

Meanwhile, many of the best of India's sons lie in jail in forced detention. Many of them are exiles in foreign lands unable to return to their motherland. Under the Bengal Regulation, one of the gifts of Lord Reading and the last British Labour Cabinet to India, a large number of young men have been in jail without trial or without even the formulation of any charge. Conspiracy trials are frequent and young men whose chief fault was that they loved their country too ardently, if rashly and foolishly, suffer the extreme penalty of the law. This is the Pax Britannica in India and it is not surprising that the Indian is thoroughly dissatisfied with it and looks forward to the day when he will have no more of it.

What the future will bring it will be vain to prophesy but it is clear that no settlement short of complete self-rule will solve the problem. That self-rule may mean complete independence or it may mean what is called Dominion Status. Most Indian politicians talk about Dominion Status but perhaps they do so because it is apparently easier to achieve. In reality the vast majority desire independence and some have the courage to say so. The British Empire does not appear to be in good health and daily it becomes more and more nebulous. The chief link between England and the Dominions is one of sentiment but sentiment does not carry one far when interests clash. If India were a Dominion there would be little of this sentiment, in fact at present there is something very much the reverse of it, and her economic interests are bound to clash with those of England. It is thus a little difficult to see how India could continue as a free member of the British Commonwealth. But perhaps the future may bring its surprises and India may find a place there. For India has no desire to nourish past grievances. She looks to the future.

One tendency however is already noticeable. The idea of closer contact with Asiatic nations is becoming increasingly popular. The similarity of many ideas and cultures is partly accountable for this but the real reason is, undoubtedly, a common antagonism to European domination and exploitation. There is some talk in the East of an Asiatic Federation but this may be for the present a little premature. But whenever India achieves real freedom, she is sure to be drawn towards her neighbouring countries and to try to work in a large measure in concert with them.

2

Quetta[1]

It is curious how sometimes a relatively minor event impresses one more than a major happening. Trivial words or gestures are apt to reveal an individual far more than his studied poses and utterances. So also with nations and peoples and governments. I suppose most people will agree that one of the outstanding events of recent times in India was the shooting down of large numbers of unarmed men and women by General Dyer and his soldiery in the Jallianwala Bagh, and the consequences of this deed were far-reaching. Amritsar, indeed, has become something more than a city of the Punjab, or even the holy place of Sikhism. It typifies the world over a particularly brutal method of dealing with subject peoples. And yet ghastly as all this was, I have never had much difficulty in understanding the mentality of a Dyer, and because of that feeling of at least partial understanding, my resentment against him personally has probably been far less than that of most other Indians. It is true that he made his case unpardonable and wholly inexcusable by his arrogance and vulgar bragging[2] before the Hunter Committee of Inquiry. But even that had a psychological explanation and, granted the vulgarity and the jingoism, the rest more or less followed.

What affected me far more, and I imagine there were many others who felt this way, was the reaction in England to Dyer's deed and his evidence. Officially he was mildly reprimanded and there were no doubt many individuals who condemned him and some newspapers that criticized him strongly. But the real reaction of the British ruling classes was never in doubt. It was clear as daylight, and the *Morning Post* and the House of Lords and the subscription raised for General Dyer shouted it out to the world. This cold-blooded approval at that deed shocked me greatly. It seemed absolutely immoral, indecent; to use public school language, it was the height of bad form. I realized then, more vividly than I had ever done before, how brutal and immoral imperialism was and how it had eaten into the souls of the British upper classes.

[1] Almora District Jail, 19 August 1935. JN Papers, NMML. Published in *India and the World*, pp. 146–55. Excerpts.

[2] General Dyer had stated: "If more troops had been at hand the casualties would have been greater in proportion."

My mind went back to this revealing instance the other day when I read about the refusal of the Government of India to allow Gandhiji and Rajendra Prasad, the President of the Congress for the year, to visit Quetta after the great earthquake.[3] That refusal, a trivial enough affair, was yet most revealing of the mentality of the government. Inevitably, one thought of the contrast when last year, in connection with another great earthquake, Gandhiji had offered, on behalf of the committee of which Rajendra Babu was the honoured head, whole-hearted and "respectful" cooperation to the Government.[4] That cooperation was worth having as Rajendra Prasad's committee had almost as big a fund at its disposal as the government, with all its resources in India and England, had managed to collect; even more it was valuable because of the fine village organization of workers behind Rajendra Babu and his colleagues. It is also worth remembering that this cooperation was offered even though in theory civil disobedience of a kind continued and many prominent Congressmen were in prison.

That contrast was marked. But even apart from that the obvious course for any sensible government would have been to invite the cooperation of Rajendra Prasad after the fine work he did in the Bihar earthquake and the great experience he gained thereby. There must be very few persons in India today who can rival him in knowledge of earthquake relief work. In all probability he knows far more of the subject than all the members of the Governor-General's Executive Council and their various secretaries taken together.

Another equally obvious thing to do, in order to gain public support and cooperation, was to take a number of public men and newspapermen into the Government's confidence, give them full facilities to visit the earthquake area, and discuss the situation frankly with them. This would not have tied the hands of Government in any way and it is absurd to say that some additional arrivals in the affected area would have upset the food situation or the sanitary measures that were being taken. Such newcomers would have made their own food arrangements and if they risked catching an infectious disease that was their look-out. It was not a question of crowds of outsiders rolling in and interfering with all arrangements.

But our benign government has an astonishing knack of doing the wrong thing, and even on the rare occasions when it does the right thing it does it in a wrong way. And then it is painfully surprised when it finds that the purity of

[3] The city of Quetta was sealed under military guard on 2 June 1935, and the request of Mahatma Gandhi and Rajendra Prasad for permission to visit Quetta and conduct relief operations was rejected. The Quetta Central Relief Committee formed under the presidentship of Rajendra Prasad had to restrict its assistance to helping refugees in Sind, the Punjab and the North West Frontier Province.

[4] Mahatma Gandhi visited the afflicted towns and villages and helped the newly formed Bihar Central Relief Committee to draw up its plan of work.

its motives is suspected and cheering crowds do not welcome its efforts with enthusiasm.

> This makes a man unsocial, impolite;
> Odious when wrong, and insolent if right.

There was no room for Gandhiji or Rajendra Babu or other popular leaders and well-known relief workers in Quetta but boy scouts could be sent without danger of their catching disease or lessening the stock of food. If Gandhiji had gone, there might indeed have been a shortage of goat's milk and dates.

Quetta became one of the battle-fronts, enveloped as it were in the fog of war, a no-man's land which was cut off from the rest of the country. The official megaphone boomed out its version of the news to us and told us of the wonders that were being performed by the official agency alone and unaided by others.

> I am the blessed Glendoveer,
> Tis mine to speak and yours to hear.

True there were also the Simla correspondents of certain favoured newspapers, those wise and clever mortals who are not like unto other men, and who can even glimpse, as through a glass darkly, the mysterious workings of the godlike mind of the Government of India.[5]

It was not unnatural or unexpected that these arrangements should meet with disapproval of less favoured newspapermen and others. Nor was it at all surprising that they should, under the circumstances, give credence and publicity to vague rumours, many of them exaggerated or even unfounded. That was very wrong of course, but human nature is weak and it is not possible for all of us to live up to the high and noble standards set in Simla or New Delhi. Exclude a newspaperman and you make him suspicious and capable of believing almost anything . . .

So also a number of Indian newspapers, excited and displeased at the official attitude about Quetta, gave publicity to such scraps of news as rumour brought them. And then the Press Act and various emergency measures descended heavily on these hapless papers with their forfeits and securities.[6] A large sum of money went from the newspapers to the provincial governments. The majesty of the Government had been vindicated. Truth had prevailed, as it was bound to in the end, and the serpent of falsehood had been crushed by the swift action of various magistrates and governors and the like.

I have absolutely no idea what these items of news or comments were to

[5] *The Statesman* of 2 July 1935 reported that rescue work "was completed with the incomparable efficiency and expedition of the army in India."

[6] The Government proceeded against four newspapers, viz., *Free Press Journal, Bombay Standard, Tej* and *Quami Gazette*, under the Press Emergency Powers Act for publishing articles criticizing their Quetta policy.

which Government objected. It really does not much matter what they were and I am prepared to assume that they were thoroughly objectionable. What seems to me much more important is the extraordinary attitude of the Government throughout this Quetta business. They took one false step after another—perhaps each subsequent step was made inevitable by the previous one—and made a horrid mess of a simple business. Who could have thought that even an earthquake could be bungled in this manner? And it is this bungling that reveals as in a flash that curious compound of conceit, ideas of prestige, intolerance, a certain cleverness, distrust, fear and stupidity which go to make up the mind of the Government of India.

I do not mean that the actual relief work in Quetta was bungled. I have no knowledge of that but I am inclined to think that official agency, even when efficient, lacks the human touch and is often wasteful. I imagine that the addition of non-officials to the workers, especially in the villages round about Quetta city, would have gone a long way to supply this human touch. Personally I am not a believer even in the efficiency of official processes. But as the relief work was in charge of the military it was probably far more efficient than the civil side of Government would have been.

It was indeed fortunate for Quetta that a large force of military was stationed there and they could immediately start relief operations. Disciplined soldiers are the best workers in such an emergency, especially in the early days. In any event the British and Indian soldiers would have worked hard and earnestly at the task; the fact that their own comrades had perished in the catastrophe must have added to their zeal. Unfortunately, but very naturally, the army is not popular with the people. It is looked upon as something foreign, meant and used from time to time to keep them down. The Indian soldiers are definitely mercenary, the British troops foreigners, wholly ignorant of the land they are serving in, and both of them are looked upon with fear and dislike by the people; specially is the Tommy, the *gora*, the object of this distrust. There are no points of contact between him and the people and there are numerous barriers separating them.

This gulf and the fear and distrust of the military are unfortunate. The Indian soldier is very much the peasant we know with a thin veneer of soldiering over him; the British Tommy is a very simple and likeable creature, rather shy and afraid of himself in strange surroundings, but always willing to expand and grow friendly if approached in the right way. The two, with the discipline and organization behind them, were ideal workers in the earthquake area and it was well that they were utilized immediately. But however good they might have been, they could not supply all the human needs of the people, nor could they easily get rid of the distrust which had long been associated with them.

It seems to me that it was also very proper on the part of the Government to regulate the entry of people into the earthquake area. Large numbers of odd people, bent on doing relief work after their own fashion, might easily have

created confusion and hindered work rather than helped it. But to regulate entry is one thing, to close and seal the area as if it was a theatre of war is quite another. I do not know if any military considerations prompted this secretive policy, for the frontier is not far from Quetta. But no considerations could possibly justify the deliberate and offensive exclusion of noted public men who were offering their services in a spirit of cooperation. It is quite inconceivable that any such attitude could have been taken up in any other country that is supposed to be civilized. Only a government arrogantly irresponsive to popular feeling could have acted in this way.

Why did the Government of India act in this manner, I wondered, for whatever its actions might be, it has to bow down to some extent to the spirit of the times, and to talk of cooperation and the like. The only answer I could find was that the Government had Gandhi and the Congress on the brain. It is not for me to object to this obsession of theirs; I think they have some justification for it. But it seems to lead them into curious corners. A psychologist would probably give a satisfactory explanation of this by reference to some complex. Gandhi and the Congress are both nuisance; therefore let us ignore them, sit on them. If our superiority is not sufficiently recognized, let us proclaim it ourselves and compel people to listen to us; let us collect chits emphasizing this superiority and praising our good work. If we are not tall enough, let us stand on tip-toe; people will surely be impressed.

Perhaps it is some such unconscious functioning of the mind that forms the background of much that the Government does. The old desire to keep up prestige means in the end some kind of attempt to stand on one's toes, in the vain hope of adding to one's size. But this is hardly a dignified procedure and seldom deceives. Often it has the opposite effect.

So it was in this Quetta business. The attempt of the Government to snub Gandhi and the Congress resulted in the Government being shown up for what it was, through its hurried attempts to justify itself, and its unseemly anger at its critics. The Congress and Gandhi did rather well. There was dignity in their attitude; there was no shouting, no outward anger, no official remonstrance even.

Our high officers of government move about with pomp and circumstance, their surroundings impress us, their gilded liveries of office dazzle us, they address us from time to time in stately, if somewhat trite, phrases pointing out the error of our ways. They cultivate the calm and dignified demeanour of the great.

> They think that dignity of soul may come,
> Perchance, with dignity of body.

Perhaps it helps a little. But even dignity of body is not very evident when one is standing on one's toes.

3

Britain and India[1]

Badenweiler, 17 January 1936

Dear Lord Lothian,

I entirely agree with you that we are in the midst of one of the most creative and changing epochs in human history. It does seem that we have reached the end of an era and are on the threshold of another. I also agree that the two ideals which are moving most intelligent and sensitive persons are: the ending of the present anarchy of sovereign states, with their hatreds, fears and conflicts, and the creation of a world order; and the socialistic ideal, aiming at "a system whereby the earth and its fruits will be exploited for the benefit of all members of the community in proportion to the services they render to it and not according to the accident of property ownership." The League of Nations, you say, represents the former ideal. I think this is true in so far as it represents a widespread sentiment. In actual practice, however, it hardly functions that way, and it represents the policies of certain great powers who have no intention of giving up their privileged position or their absolute sovereignty and who endeavour to utilize the League to make the world safe for themselves.

Another question arises. Even if the people behind the League honestly desired the ending of the anarchy of sovereign states, or were pushed by popular opinion in that direction, could they succeed in that objective without changing fundamentally the social order—without, in other words, accepting socialism? Of course they would have to shed their imperialism. The League today does not look beyond the present capitalistic system; indeed it does not contemplate even an ending of imperialism. It is essentially based on the status quo and its chief function is to preserve it. In practice, therefore, it is actually a hindrance to the realization of the very ideal which many people think it represents. If it is true, as I believe it is, that imperialism and the anarchy of sovereign states are inevitable developments of the present phase of capitalism, then it follows that you cannot get rid of the former without also getting rid of the latter. Thus in practice the League has little to do with its supposed ideals and even puts difficulties in the way of their realization; but even its ideals, by

[1] To Lord Lothian. JN Correspondence, NMML. Excerpts.

themselves, are such that they lead to a blind alley. It is not surprising that it finds itself frequently involved in hopeless contradictions. It simply cannot go ahead on the basis of the status quo because the root of the trouble is that status quo both in its imperialist and social aspects. It is right and proper that the League should condemn Italian aggression in Abyssinia and try to curb it,[2] but the very system which it protects and seeks to perpetuate inevitably leads to that aggression. There is no valid answer for an imperialist to Mussolini's taunt that he is doing what other imperialist powers have done before, and are doing now, though not in his particularly blatant way. It does seem rather illogical to condemn Italian bombing in East Africa and maintain a dignified silence about British bombing on the North West Frontier of India.

You yourself are of opinion that the achievement of the end is not likely to be by the methods of the Covenant of the League. The League, therefore, offers little hope except in so far as it represents a vague and widespread sentiment in favour of world order and peace. It helps sometimes in mobilizing that sentiment and in postponing conflict.

The two ideals you have mentioned run into each other and I do not think they can be separated. The second ideal, of socialism, indeed includes the first, and it may be said that real world order and peace will only come when socialism is realized on a world scale. It is perfectly true, as you say, that real socialism involves a profound transformation of the deeper habits of opinion and of character and this inevitably takes time.[3] Under favourable circumstances and with the goodwill of a large number of people concerned, these changes may be brought about within a generation. But as things are, instead of that goodwill, we have the fiercest opposition and ill will, and it is therefore likely that the period will be a much longer one. The main question for us to consider is how to create an environment and circumstances under which these deeper changes can take place. Only that will be a real step in the right direction. Under present conditions the environment is against us and instead of lessening our mutual hatreds and selfishness and acquisitiveness, which lead to conflict, actually encourages all these evil traits. It is true that in spite of this grave disadvantage some progress is made and some of us, at least, begin to challenge our old habits and opinions. But the process is very slow and it is almost counterbalanced by the growth of contrary tendencies.

Capitalism stimulated acquisitiveness and these deeper instincts which we

[2] On 3 October 1935 the League of Nations imposed an embargo on arms to Italy and on imports from Italy and a ban on loans and credits, but the sanctions failed and were withdrawn in July 1936.

[3] In his article and his letter to Jawaharlal Nehru of 31 December 1935, Lothian had argued that the world was moving towards the twin ideals of internationalism and socialism. But as Britain was shedding her imperialism, India should initiate social and economic reforms without losing her unity which she could achieve in no way "except through constitutional means" in the 1935 Act.

want to get rid of now. It did much good also in its earlier stages and by raising production greatly increased the standard of living. In other ways too, it served a useful purpose and it was certainly an improvement on the stage that preceded it. But it seems to have outlived its utility and today it not only bars all progress in a socialistic direction but encourages many undesirable habits and instincts in us. I do not see how we can move along socialistic lines in a society which is based on acquisitiveness and in which the profit motive is the dominant urge. It thus becomes necessary to change the basis of this acquisitive society and to remove the profit motive, as far as we can, in order to develop new and more desirable habits and ways of thinking. That involves a complete change-over from the capitalist system.

It is true, as you state it, that the capitalist system has not created international anarchy; it merely succeeded to it. It has in the past removed or lessened actual civil war within the state, but it has intensified the conflict of classes, which has grown to such an extent as to threaten civil war in the future. In the international sphere it has perpetuated anarchy on a bigger scale and, instead of petty local wars, it has brought about vast and terrible national conflicts. And so, though it does not create this anarchy, it inevitably increases it and cannot put an end to it unless it puts an end to itself. It has produced the modern imperialisms which not only crush and exploit large parts of the earth's surface and vast numbers of people, but also come into continual conflict with each other.

It may be that Marx overstates the case for the materialist or economic interpretation of history. Perhaps he did so for the simple reason that it had been largely ignored, or at any rate very much understated till then. But Marx never denied the influence of other factors on the shaping of events. He laid the greatest stress on one—the economic factor. Whether that stress was a little overdone does not make much difference. The fact remains, I think, that his interpretation of history is the only one which does explain history to some extent and gives it meaning. It helps us to understand the present and it is quite remarkable how many of his predictions have come true.

How will socialism come? You say that it is not likely to be achieved by the universal nationalization of the instruments of production and distribution. Must it not involve the ending of the profit and acquisitive motive and the replacement of it by a communal and cooperative motive? And does it not involve the building up of a new civilization on a different basis from that of the present? It may be that a great deal of private initiative is left; in some matters, cultural, etc., it must be left. But in all that counts, in a material sense, nationalization of the instruments of production and distribution seems to be inevitable. There may be half-way houses to it, but one can hardly have two contradictory and conflicting processes going on side by side. The choice must be made and for one who aims at socialism there can be only one choice.

I think it is possible, in theory, to establish socialism by democratic means,

provided of course the full democratic process is available. In practice, however, there are likely to be very great difficulties, because the opponents of socialism will reject the democratic method when they see their power threatened. The rejection of democracy does not or should not come from the socialist side but from the other. That of course is fascism. How is this to be avoided? The democratic method has many triumphs to its credit, but I do not know that it has yet succeeded in resolving a conflict about the very basic structure of the state or of society. When this question arises, the group or class which controls the state-power does not voluntarily give it up because the majority demands it. We have seen enough examples of this in post-war Europe and in the decline of democracy itself. Obviously no socialist transformation can be brought about without the goodwill, or at least the passive acquiescence, of the great majority.

Coming to Britain and India, I find a large number of assumptions in your letter which I think have little justification. As I do not agree with many of your premises, I also find myself in disagreement with some of your conclusions. You say that "Britain is shedding the old imperialism and is actively concerned with trying to find the way to prevent the anarchy involved in universal national self-determination from ending in fresh wars or in a new deluge of imperialism." I am afraid I fail to see entirely that Britain is acting in this role. I do not see any shedding of the old imperialism, but only repeated and strenuous attempts to hold on to it, and to strengthen it, though a new facade is presented to the public view in some instances. Britain certainly does not want fresh wars. She is a satisfied and surfeited power. Why should she risk what she has got? She wants to maintain the status quo which is eminently to her advantage. She dislikes new imperialisms because they conflict with her old imperialism and not because of any dislike of imperialism itself.

You refer also to the "constitutional road" in India. What exactly is this constitutional road? I can understand constitutional activities where there is a democratic constitution, but where there is no such thing, constitutional methods have no meaning. The word constitutional then simply means legal, and legal simply means in accordance with the wishes of an autocratic executive which can make laws and issue decrees and ordinances regardless of public opinion. What is the constitutional method in Germany or Italy today? What was this method in the India of the nineteenth century or of the early twentieth century or even now? There was no possibility of bringing about a change in India then (or now) through any constitutional apparatus which the people of India could sufficiently influence. They could only beg or revolt. The mere fact that it is impossible for the great majority of the people of India to make their will effective shows that they have no constitutional way open to them. They can either submit to something they dislike intensely or adopt other than so-called constitutional methods. Such methods may be wise or unwise, under the

particular circumstances, but the question of their being constitutional or not does not arise.

It is perfectly true that in politics, as in most other things, we cannot start with a clean slate. It is also true that life is often too complex for human logic. We have to take things as they are, whether we like them or not, and to reconcile our idealism with them. But we must move in the right direction. This means, according to you, first of all the preservation of the unity of India, and then the elimination of communalism, the control and gradual devesting of vested interests and the raising of the standard of living of the people, the development of a true Indian army, and the training of the youth of India in constructive practical work required in a democratic state. Beyond all this lies the socialistic ideal, and the general background must be such as to develop those deeper instincts and habits which are necessary for the real working of this ideal.

I suppose many of us would agree with that statement, so far as it goes, though we may word it differently and add to it, and stress some points more than others. I agree with you also that the political phase comes first; indeed without that phase there is no other phase. It may be accompanied by social changes or followed soon after by them. Personally I am perfectly prepared to accept political democracy only in the hope that this will lead to social democracy. Political democracy is only the way to the goal and is not the final objective. The real demand for it comes from a desire, sometimes unconscious, for economic changes. If these changes do not follow soon enough the political structure is likely to be unstable. I am inclined to think that in India, circumstanced as she is today, the need for economic change is urgent and a vital political change will be inevitably accompanied or followed by substantial economic changes. In any event the political change should be such as to facilitate these social changes. If it becomes a barrier to them then it is not a desirable change or one worth having.

I am not aware of any responsible Indian who thinks in terms other than those of the unity of India. That is an essential article of our political faith and everything that we do has that for its goal. That unity, I agree, is likely to be a federal unity, but that does not mean of course anything like the federation of the new Act. That unity also is not the unity of subjection under a common yoke. It is possible that a period of chaos might result in disunity and the formation of separate states in India, but that danger seems to me very unreal. The tendency to unity is too strong all over the country.

The disruptive factors are, according to you, religion, race and language. I do not see the importance of race. Race in India became intertwined with religion and partly took the shape of caste. Hindus and Moslems do not form different races; they are essentially the same amalgam of races. Thus though there are various races, they run into one another and on the whole form a definite unit, racially and culturally. The so-called hundreds of languages of

India are a favourite subject for our critics, who usually have little acquaintance with a single one of them. As a matter of fact India is linguistically singularly well-knit and it is only due to the absence of popular education that numerous dialects have grown. There are ten major languages of India which cover the entire country, except for some small tracts. These belong to the two groups—Indo-Aryan and Dravidian—and between the two there is the common background of Sanskrit. Of the Indo-Aryan languages, I suppose you know that Hindustani with its various dialects accounts for over 120 millions of people, and it is spreading. The other Indo-Aryan languages—Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi—are very closely allied to it. I am sure that whatever other difficulties we may have to face in the way of Indian unity, the language will not be a major difficulty.

You compare the state of religion in India with that of Europe at the time of the Renaissace and the Reformation. It is true that the people of India have a definite religious outlook on life which is comparable to the outlook in Europe during the Middle Ages. Still your comparison does not go below the surface. India has never known in the whole course of her long history the religious strife that has soaked Europe in blood. The whole background of Indian religion, culture and philosophy was one of tolerance, and even encouragement of other beliefs. Some conflict arose when Islam came, but even that was far more political than religious, although stress is always laid on the religious side. It was the conflict between the conquerors and the conquered. In spite of recent developments, I cannot easily envisage religious conflict in India on any substantial scale. The communalism of today is essentially political, economic and middle class. I imagine (but I say so without personal knowledge) that the religious bitterness in Ulster today is far more deep-seated than anywhere in India. It is a fact that one must never forget that communalism in India is a latter-day phenomenon which has grown before our eyes. That does not lessen its significance and we may not ignore it, for it is at present a tremendous obstacle in our way and is likely to interfere with our future progress. And yet I think it is overrated and over-emphasized; it does not fundamentally affect the masses although sometimes their passions are roused. With the coming of social issues to the forefront it is bound to recede into the background. Examine the communal demands of the extreme communalists and you will find that not a single one of them has the slightest reference to the masses. The communal leaders of all groups are terribly afraid of social and economic questions and it is interesting to find them joining hands in their opposition to social progress.

British rule in India has inevitably helped in creating political unity in the country. The mere fact of common subjection was bound to result in a common desire to be rid of it. It must be remembered—a fact that is not sufficiently realized—that throughout history there has been a quite extraordinary sense of cultural and geographical unity in India, and the desire for political

unity was bound to grow under modern conditions of transport and communication. Throughout the British period, however, there has been an attempt on the part of the ruling power, partly conscious and deliberate, partly unconscious, to retard this unity. That of course was only to be expected for that has been the invariable policy of all empires and ruling groups. It is interesting to read the frank expressions of opinion of high officers in India during the nineteenth century. The problem was then not very urgent but with the growth of the nationalist movement, and especially during the last thirty years, it became acute. The reaction of the British Government was to devise new methods for creating and, if possible, perpetuating these divisions. Obviously, no one can say that there was not an inherent tendency towards division in India, and with the prospect of the approach of political power, this was likely to grow. It was possible to adopt a policy to tone down this tendency; it was also possible to accentuate it. The Government adopted the latter policy and encouraged in every way fissiparous tendency in the country. It is not possible for them or for anyone to stop the historical growth of the people, but they can and they have put checks and obstructions in the way. And the latest and most important of these are in the new Act. You commend this Act because it symbolizes the unity of India. As a matter of fact it is the very reverse; it is the prelude (if it is not combated) of greater disunity. It divides up India into religious and numerous other compartments, preserves large parts of it as feudal enclaves which cannot be touched but which can influence other parts, and checks the growth of healthy political parties on social and economic issues, which you consider "the most important urgent need in India today."

The policy of the British Government on social issues is equally marked. Far from looking towards any form of socialism or control or devesting of vested interests, it has deliberately protected numerous vested interests, created fresh ones and invariably sided with the political, social and religious reactionaries in India. The new Act is again a culmination of this policy and at no time before have these vested interests and obscurantists and reactionaries had so much power as they will have under the new federal India. The Act legally bars the door to that social progress which, according to you, should be our goal, by protecting and entrenching these vested interests, foreign and Indian. Even small measures of social reform are hardly within reach as a very great part of the financial resources of the state is mortgaged and earmarked for the maintenance of the vested interests.[4]

Every country today has to put up a stiff fight against the forces of reaction

[4] By the Government of India Act of 1935, expenditure on defence, ecclesiastical affairs, excluded areas, pensions to members of the higher services and other items, constituting in all a considerable portion of the federal expenditure, was made non-votable by the legislature. The Railway Board was also established "to perform its duties upon business principles and without being subject to political interference."

and evil. India is no exception to the rule. The tragedy of the situation is that the British people, without being conscious of it, stand today through their Parliament and officials entirely on the side of the forces of evil in India. What they would not tolerate for an instant in their own country, they encourage in India. You mention the great name of Abraham Lincoln and remind me of the vital importance he attached to the union. Presumably you think that the British Government, in trying to suppress the Congress movement, was actuated by the same noble motive of maintaining the unity of India in the face of disruptive forces. I do not quite see how the unity of India was threatened by that movement—indeed I think that that movement or some similar movement alone can bring about an organic unity in the country, and the British Government's activities push us in a contrary direction. But, apart from this, do you not think that the comparison of Lincoln with the attempt of an imperialist power to crush the freedom movement in a country subject to it is very far-fetched?

You want to eradicate undesirable and selfish habits and instincts in the people. Do you think that the British in India are helping in this direction? Quite apart from their support of the reactionary elements, the background of British rule is worth considering. It is of course based on an extreme form of widespread violence and the only sanction is fear. It suppresses the usual liberties which are supposed to be essential to the growth of a people; it crushes the adventurous, the brave, the sensitive types, and encourages the timid, the opportunist and time-serving, the sneak and the bully. It surrounds itself with a vast army of spies and informers and *agents provocateurs*. It this the atmosphere in which the more desirable virtues grow or democratic institutions flourish?

You ask me whether the Congress could at any time have established a liberal constitution for all India by consent, except by making in fundamentals the same kind of concessions to communalism, to the princes and to property. That presumes that the present Act establishes a liberal constitution by consent. If this constitution is a liberal one it is difficult for me to imagine what an illiberal constitution can be like, and as for consent, I doubt if anything that the British Government have ever done in India has been quite so much resented and disapproved of as the new Act. Incidentally, the measures to obtain the necessary consent involved the fiercest repression all over the country, and even now, as a prelude to the enforcement of the Act, all-India and provincial laws suppressing all kinds of civil liberty have been passed. To talk of consent under these circumstances does seem most extraordinary. There is an amazing amount of misconception about this in England. If the problem has to be faced the dominant facts cannot be ignored.

It is true that the Government has succeeded in making some arrangement with the princes and with various minority groups, but even these groups are

highly dissatisfied except, to some extent, with the minor arrangements affecting their representation. Take the principal minority, the Muslims. No one can say that the aristocratic, semi-feudal and other hand-picked Muslim members of the Round Table Conference represented the Muslim masses. You may be surprised to know that the Congress has still considerable Muslim backing.

Could the Congress have done better? I have no doubt that the nationalist movement, of which the Congress is the symbol and the principal standard bearer, could have done infinitely better. The Congress is of course a bourgeois organization (I wish it was more socialistic) and therefore the property question would not have arisen in any acute form at that stage. The communal question would have had to be faced and, I think, solved for the time being at least by a large measure of consent. Probably some degree of communalism would have remained to begin with, but far less than what we are presented with under the new Act. What is more important—circumstances would have been created for the elimination of communalism in the near future and for growth along social lines; the land problem would have been tackled. The real difficulties would have been two: the vested interests of the British Government and the City of London, and the princes. The former represent the crux of the question, all else is really secondary. The princes would, under the circumstances, have adapted themselves to a considerable extent to the new situation, and the Congress, constituted as it is today, would have given them a long enough rope. The pressure of public opinion, including that of their own subjects, would have been too great for them to resist. Probably some temporary arrangement might have been made with the Indian States to begin with to enable this public opinion to come into play and shape developments. Presuming of course that the British Government is not there to back up the undiluted autocracy of the princes, there is little doubt that the States would gradually fall into line. No question of civil conflict need have arisen.

All this would have been very far from what I desire but it would at least have been a definite political and democratic step in the right direction. In the framing of a constitution or a political structure it is manifestly impossible to get everyone concerned to agree. One tries to have the maximum agreement and the others, who do not agree, either fall into line according to democratic procedure, or have to be pressed or coerced into doing so. The British Government, representing the autocratic and authoritarian tradition, and chiefly bent on preserving their own interests, tried to win the consent of the princes and some other reactionary elements, and coerced the vast majority of the people. The Congress would inevitably have functioned differently.

All this is of course airy talk without substance for it ignores the principal factor—the British Government and British financial interests.

There is another consideration which deserves notice. The Congress, under Mr. Gandhi's leadership, had laid great stress on nonviolence and the conversion of the adversary rather than his coercion. Quite apart from the metaphysical aspects of this doctrine and its feasibility or otherwise in the final sense, there can be no doubt that this has created a powerful feeling against civil conflict and in favour of attempting to win over various groups in India. That is a factor of great value to us in preserving the unity of India and in toning down opposition.

People discuss the noncooperation and civil disobedience movements in terms of constitutional action or otherwise. I have referred to this aspect earlier. May I put to you how they have always impressed themselves on me? Of course these movements exercised tremendous pressure on the British Government and shook the Government machinery. But the real importance, to my mind, lay in the effect they had on our own people, and especially the village masses. Poverty and a long period of autocratic rule, with its inevitable atmosphere of fear and coercion, had thoroughly demoralized and degraded them. They had hardly any of the virtues that are necessary for citizenship, they were cuffed and bullied by every petty official, tax-collector, policeman, landlord's agent; they were utterly lacking in courage or the capacity for united action or resistance to oppression; they sneaked and told tales against each other; and when life became too hard they sought an escape from it in death. It was all very depressing and deplorable and yet one could hardly blame them for it; they were the victims of all-powerful circumstances. Noncooperation dragged them out of this mire and gave them self-respect and self-reliance; they developed the habit of cooperative action; they acted courageously and did not submit so easily to unjust oppression; their outlook widened and they began to think a little in terms of India as a whole; they discussed political and economic questions (crudely no doubt) in their bazaars and meeting places. The lower middle classes were affected in the same way but the change in the masses was the most significant. It was a remarkable transformation and the Congress, under Gandhi's leadership, must have the credit for it. It was something far more important than constitutions and the structure of government. It was the foundation on which only a stable structure or constitution could be built up.

All this of course involved a cataclysmic upheaval of Indian life. Usually in other countries this has involved a vast amount of hatred and violence. And yet in India, thanks to Mahatma Gandhi, there was, relatively speaking, exceedingly little of this. We developed many of the virtues of war without its terrible evils. And the real organic unity of India was brought far nearer than it had ever been. Even the religious and communal differences toned down. You know that the most vital question which affects rural India, which means eighty-five per cent of India, is the land question. Any such upheaval in another country, together

with the terrible economic depression, would have resulted there in jacqueries. It is extraordinary that India escaped them. That was not because of Government repression but because of Gandhi's teaching and the message of the Congress.

The Congress thus released all the live forces in the country and suppressed the evil and disruptive tendencies. It did so in a peaceful, disciplined and as civilized a way as was possible under the circumstances, though inevitably there were risks in such a mass release. How did the government react? You know that well enough. By trying to crush those live and virile forces and encouraging all the evil and disruptive tendencies, and doing so in the most uncivilized way. The British Government has functioned in a purely fascist way in India during the past six years, and the only differences has been that it did not take open pride in this fact as the fascist countries do.

This letter has become terribly long and I do not want now to consider the new constitution Act in detail. That is hardly necessary for the Act has been analysed and criticized by a host of persons in India holding all sorts of opinions, but agreeing in one thing—their utter disapproval of the Act. Very recently one of the most eminent leaders of the Indian liberals described the new constitution privately as "the quintessence of the most venomous opposition to all our national aspirations." Is it not remarkable that even our moderate politicians should think so and yet you, with all your broad sympathy for Indian aspirations, should approve of it and say that it "involves the transfer of the citadel of power in India to Indian hands"? Is the gulf between our ways of thinking so vast? Why is it so? It almost becomes more of a problem in psychology than in politics or economics.

The psychological aspect is after all very important. Is it realized in England what the past few years have meant to India? How the attempt to crush human dignity and decency, the injuries to the soul more even than to the body, have left a lasting impress on the Indian people? Never have I realized so well how a tyrannical use of power degrades those who use it as well as those who suffer from it. How can we forget it without forgetting everything that is decent and honourable? How can we forget it when it continues from day to day? Is this the prelude to freedom and the transfer of the citadel of power?

People react in different ways to oppression. Some are broken, others harden. We have both kinds in India as elsewhere. Many of us cannot desert our colleagues, who suffer in prison or otherwise, whatever the consequences might be to our individual selves. Many of us cannot tolerate an insult to Gandhi, whether we differ from him or not, for Gandhi represents to us the honour of India. No one in his senses likes conflict and suffering and the way of catastrophe. The Indian national movement has done all in its power to avoid this way, without at the same time giving up the very basis of its existence. But it is the British Government that has proceeded along that path and made

a peaceful solution more and more difficult. If it imagines that by merely persisting in this direction it will succeed, it seems to have strangely misread both the lesson of history and the present temper of the Indian people. If catastrophe is to be avoided, it will have to be for the British Government to retrace its steps.

Please forgive me for the length of this letter.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4

Twenty Years[1]

The Great War was over and the great men of the victorious nations sat in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles to refashion the world. One of them, from across the Atlantic, talked eloquently of democracy and self-determination and a League of Nations to ensure peace. But the others, secure now in victory, had no further use for this idealistic talk meant for the multitude. It had served its purpose to rouse public enthusiasm, and now it must not be allowed to interfere with the scheming of hard-headed realistic men. The Big Five met, and then the Big Three, and out of their labours emerged the Treaty of Versailles. By this treaty all the hopes and idealism of the war were buried deep down in the soil which contained the mortal remains of so many brave young men. By that treaty they were betrayed.

We have lived in this era of the Versailles Treaty these twenty years, and each succeeding year has brought war and revolution, horror and misery to the peoples of the world. And yet the old guard of politicians who had brought the war and made this peace continued in command and stuck complacently to their old ways which had so often brought disaster. Not everywhere, for there was one vast area where a new order came into being and challenged continually the old.

Mussolini rose in Italy and the world heard of fascism. Dictatorships were established in many of the countries of Europe. An unprecedented inflation crushed the middle classes of Germany. Meanwhile the wise men met at Geneva or elsewhere and discussed in leisurely fashion the advantage of disarmament or the question of reparations.

Suddenly the Great Depression seized the world by the throat and rich and proud England was alarmed and prosperous America was shaken up. Year after year it spread, bringing international trade almost to a standstill, and writing with letters of fire the decay of the capitalist structure.

Hitler came, child and avenger of Versailles, and set a new standard in brutality and cruel repression. England encouraged him, in spite of her public opinion, and looked upon him as the champion who would check the Soviet

[1] Editorial in the *National Herald,* 19 October 1939. JN Papers, NMML.

tide. Events moved more swiftly still, over-topping one another, and aggression followed aggression. England stood by, protesting but nevertheless encouraging by her action. So it was in Manchuria and later in Abyssinia. Hitler took possession of Austria, almost on the invitation of the British Government. And then came the tragedy of Czechoslovakia in September 1938.

All this is past history but we refer to it again for we forget it at our peril. The Viceroy has done well to take us back twenty years, for we shall refresh our minds with events already buried in the pages of history and learn our lesson from them. We shall remember British policy in China, which connived at aggression, and Munich, that turning point in the world's history. And who can ever forget Spain and the infinite horror of her betrayal? We shall remember that the men of Munich are still at the helm of affairs in England and guide her policy. Is it surprising that they should father the new statement of British policy in India, which is as old as British imperialism itself? It is a policy of crushing all liberal and freedom-loving elements and "appeasement" of the reactionaries both in Europe and India, of entrenching their empire and protecting their financial and other vested interests.

Is it not true that even after the invasion of Poland by Germany, Mr. Neville Chamberlain still dreamed of the "appeasement" of Germany and turning her energy and armed might towards Russia? In that fateful meeting of the British Parliament, on the eve of the declaration of war, the British Prime Minister spoke haltingly and cautiously and roused the ire even of his Conservative followers who shouted to the Labour leader to speak for the nation. Sensing the strength of public opinion, Mr. Chamberlain sent that night his ultimatum to Germany.

These are the leaders in this war against aggression and for democracy. The ghosts of Munich and Spain haunt them as they haunt the world, and it is not through them that peace and freedom can come. Can India, who was indignantly and insistently opposed to their foreign policy, now agree to become their tool? But the question has already been answered by the Viceroy.

Twenty years have passed by beyond recall and not even a viceregal statement can bring them back. India has learnt much from them and developed strength and, in spite of much diversity, unity of purpose. She will not go back, and even if she was weak and badly led, the world would not allow her to do so. For the dominating fact in the world today is the break-up of the old order, both political and economic, and these broken eggs cannot be put together again. The British Empire representing this dying order, will pass away, and the present economic system will give place to another.

5

Reply to an Open Letter[1]

22 June 1941

Dear Miss Rathbone,

The Secretary to the Governor of the United Provinces has sent me through the Superintendent of the Jail, a copy of the letter you have addressed to "Some Indian Friends." Some days ago I read the letter in the newspapers. It struck me as odd then that you should thus publicly address people who were in prison and incapacitated from answering in a like manner. Your letter was perhaps meant more for the public than for those to whom it was apparently addressed.

In the course of that letter, however, special reference is made to me and to what I have written, and you have further taken the trouble to send me a special copy of the letter. I feel, therefore, that some kind of an acknowledgment is due from me.

I find some difficulty in answering your letter. That difficulty is partly due to my being in prison and subjected to prison regulations forbidding me from taking part in any public activity. Partly also it is due to the tone and content of your letter, for it can hardly be considered an appeal to reason or a dispassionate consideration of a difficult and vital problem. It is an indictment admittedly partial, and it exhibits the anger and passion of a war mentality. That is perhaps natural under the circumstances for, as is well-known, truth and reason are the first casualties in war time. Nevertheless it does not help and it adds to the bitterness and confusion. Perhaps you have already seen some of the reactions to your letter in Indian minds, more especially the statement issued by one who is not a politician or a member of the Indian National Congress, but who is revered and admired by every Indian and large numbers of people in other countries-Dr. Rabindranath Tagore.[2] Tagore has just passed

[1] Reply to Eleanor Rathbone's open letter. JN Correspondence, NMML.

[2] On 4 June 1941, Tagore had stated: "I have been deeply pained at Miss Rathbone's open letter to Indians. . . . The lady has ill-served the cause of her people by addressing so indiscreet, indeed impertinent, a challenge to our conscience. . . . The British hate the Nazis for merely challenging their world mastery, and Miss Rathbone expects us to kiss the hand

his eightieth year and is far removed from the dust of politics and the heat of controversy. Yet he felt compelled to come out of his retirement to challenge and repudiate the charge you had made. If such was the reaction of a calm-eyed sage, who long years ago left the narrow confines of nationalism and devoted his life and precious gifts to the love of beauty and truth and art and the promotion of international understanding, what then would be the reaction of humbler mortals? So you will notice that the effect of your public letters has been the reverse of what presumably you intended, and you have succeeded, unwittingly, in adding to the bitterness and ill will which unfortunately are as broad and deep as the oceans which separate India from England.

I would not like to say anything in reply which might add to this bitterness and widen the gulf between us, for I am deeply conscious of the vital issues at stake, which should transcend human passion and pettiness, and I am fully aware of the agony of spirit which you and others in England are passing through. I would not willingly add to this. Yet what am I to say or to write if I am to avoid the very controversial issues that you have raised and the charges you have brought against me and my people? Indeed, your indictment is so carelessly wide flung, so far removed from facts, so ignorant of India and the fire and sorrow that have consumed us, that even to venture a brief reply would mean my writing at great length, and no letter can contain what I have to say.

There is another difficulty that faces me. In approaching any subject, there must be at least some common ground, some accepted basis of discussion. Otherwise we talk in different languages unintelligible to each other. I fear greatly, judging from your letter, that there is hardly any common ground between us when we consider the relations of England to India. Some of the so-called gifts of Britain to us, which appear to you as blessings, have been to us insult and humilation which we have rejected and condemned. You refer complacently to the steps towards Indian self-government culminating in the statute of 1935, the promise of Dominion Status and the latest offer that the framework of India's future constitution should be drawn up by Indians themselves. I am afraid you do not know much about all this or else you would be deeply troubled. And certainly you do not seem to know anything of how the people of India have reacted to all this pompous language, full of sound and meaning little. It is not merely people like me who have rejected all this patronizing insult to a great nation, but the moderate of moderates, the over-cautious, and even those whom we consider reactionaries in India. Do you

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of her people in servility for having riveted chains on ours. . . . I should have thought that the decent Britisher would at least keep silent at these wrongs and be grateful to us for our inaction, but that he should add insult to injury and pour salt over our wounds passes all bounds of decency."

know how these very moderate gentlemen have viewed the present crisis and the answer they have received from the British Government?

It is true that I owe a great deal to English thought, to English literature, English history, English men of science, sociologists, etc. I owe a great deal also to the inspiration I have drawn from the American Revolution, the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution; to the magnificent record of Chinese thought and culture. But most of all I owe to India, to Indian thought and culture, to that amazing continuity of a many-sided culture that has been our glorious and proud tradition and heritage for five thousand years. I am part of it and, howsoever humble, a symbol of it. It is a debt I can never repay: but it is an obligation that I cannot forget and which I shall seek to discharge to the end of my days.

I have tried to weave these numerous strains into one organic pattern for my country and for the world, for I am convinced that in the modern world there must be some such joint pattern, taking the best from each and removing all causes of disharmony. I have looked forward passionately to the emergence of a world order, wherein each culture has a place and combines with other cultures to produce a rich, colourful and harmonious pattern for all, and wherein our narrow nationalisms and petty hates have ceased to be. That language of internationalism I am prepared to talk to any person, and for the sake of that ideal, India, I am sure, will give much.

But Empire and all that goes with Empire, vested interest and exploitation, poverty and misery, the thwarting and crushing of millions of people, the children who have no joy in their lives, the men and women who never smile but labour continuously so that others might prosper—that Empire I hate and I shall have none of it whatever the consequences. You, perhaps, look at this picture from a distance with rose-coloured glasses. But I am not a spectator: I am a victim, an actor in this tragic drama.

I have admired much in English thought and learnt much from English history. It may surprise you to learn that I have tried to apply those lessons to India, and even in my present action I have found help and justification in English precedents. Do English thought and English history justify Empire and the crushing of fine institutions? Do you think that the India Office or the Government of India or their underlings represent that thought and history? I would have thought otherwise: that these authoritarians represent the very ideas and institutions against which, in earlier times, the English people rebelled and rebelled with success. In India today the speakers of provincial parliaments, those who have been prime ministers and ministers, and many hundreds of members, are in prison. No new elections are held, and if there is any difference in theory or practice, between Hitler's *Gauleiters* and those whom we have to suffer as viceroys and governors, I am not aware of it. I would ask

you to remember what English history teaches us when a king or his representative suppresses parliament and attempts to rule autocratically.

I do not want to injure England or interfere with her in any way. It is India and her future that concern me. You seem to forget that fact and the further fact that it is the British Government that is continually interfering with us, humiliating us and injuring us. If we cannot get on together, why does not the British Government leave us to our own devices? Do you think that self-respecting individuals and nations can ever agree to be coerced into any action? Can friendship and cooperation be secured by the whip or the knout or threats of future punishment?

England stands now for the independence of Abyssinia: we welcome it—England vicariously offers independence to Syria: we are glad of it, though it is odd to notice how England can be generous at other people's expense. England guarantees every little Balkan country its future freedom. But where India is concerned, independence becomes an evil thing, and we have instead platitudes and insults and a riveting of all the chains that hold us in bondage. For us to ask for independence is to help Hitler, to take advantage of England's difficulty. It seems to be forgotten that most of us have spent our youth and manhood in prison for a generation now in making this very demand. Hitler was not heard of then. Now that Hitler has become a menace and a danger, we are told we must forget the demand, forget the all-consuming passion of our lives, and fight for and in the name of an empire which has crushed us and which we have been combating in our own peaceful way all our lives. Does all this seem to you reasonable? Do you realize how the word 'Empire', which Mr. Churchill is so fond of using, hurts and angers us?

You have referred to my mention of Amritsar in my new book: *The Unity of India*. I am afraid I have not seen this book yet. Perhaps the censorship here does not think it desirable that I should see my own book. I do not, therefore, know the context of the reference. But it surprises me that you should object to my casual reference to Martial Law and Amritsar as something that followed the last Great War. It is a little difficult to deal with such matters briefly as your knowledge of the course of events in India appears to be very limited. As a matter of fact since the Amritsar massacre we have repeatedly had far worse and more horrible experiences in India. I did not even mention these in my writings. But it is inevitable for any person not swept away by momentary excitement to consider events, their causes and consequences, and to learn from them. It was inevitable for us to think of the war of 1914–18, the promises made and broken and what followed. We have had enough of these resounding words meaning just less than nothing.

I do not for an instant challenge your personal goodwill to the people of India or that of many other Englishmen and Englishwomen. But if there is one vital lesson which recent years have taught us it is this: that well-meaning

individuals and groups have no influence whatever on state policy or on predatory imperialisms. The last Great War shouted out this lesson and all the intervening years with their tragedies have done likewise. Only a fool or a half-wit refuses to profit by previous experience, and a nation that is so foolish deserves to perish.

In these days of horrible and inhuman bombing from the air, do you remember the repeated bombings in the North West Frontier of India? This was a regular and continuing operation for years. And when it was sought to ban all air bombing (in the League of Nations or the Disarmament Conference) British representatives came in the way of this as they wanted to make a reservation in favour of what they termed "police" bombing in the Frontier Province and in other colonial areas. I am sure that the average Englishman disliked this reservation intensely but he was powerless before the system which governs him.

Do you also remember what Mr. Amery said about Manchuria and India eight years ago, when Japan was invading Manchuria? Mr. Amery, speaking in the House of Commons, defended Japan's action as according to him it was based upon fundamental realities, and Japan was quite right in acting "with the object of creating peace and order in Manchuria and defending herself against the continual aggression of vigorous Chinese nationalism. Our whole policy in India, our whole policy in Egypt, stand condemned if we condemn Japan." So said Mr. Amery. I do not usually agree with him, but I do agree entirely with his comparison of Japanese aggression in Manchuria with British policy in India and Egypt. If that is so, then the whole of British policy in India and Egypt and the colonies, in other words the whole British imperialist policy, must be abandoned and liquidated in favour of an utterly different policy, if Britain has radically changed her attitude towards aggression. If, however, her imperialist policy continues unchanged, then we are led to doubt whether there has been any fundamental change in her attitude towards aggression. The fact that Mr. Neville Chamberlain's appeasement policy was ended does not lead to the conclusion that Britain's policy underwent any basic change, though the results, in the shape of war, etc., were far-reaching. Appeasement ended not because it was thought bad but because there was nothing more left to be handed over to the aggressors, short of vital interests and bits of the British Empire. So long as appeasement could be carried out at other countries' and other peoples' expense, it was continued—when payment had to be made out in one's own coin, it ended and war came. All this does not indicate any vital difference in outlook, though the mere fact of war itself was a revolutionizing factor in the situation.

I have endeavoured, in the preceding paragraph, to analyse the attitude of the British Government. That, I know, was not the attitude of the average Englishman, and this is just my difficulty: the well-meaning do not count in

national and imperial matters, except very rarely when some wave of excitement sweeps them. Usually they are completely taken in by the statesmen and politicians who use fine and resounding phrases which enthuse people, and who later on revert to their old sharp practices, and it is too late to check them then. Disillusion results. That was the story of the last Great War. That is likely to be the story of this one unless people are more wary. With this difference that this war is much more vital and far-reaching in its consequences and events are likely to take charge of themselves, as indeed they are doing, unless there are men who can understand them and to some extent control them. It is worse than folly to blind ourselves to these events of revolutionary significance for to do so is to lead ourselves to disaster. This war is much more than a military contest, though it is that of course. It is moving men's minds in all manner of revolutionary directions and is upsetting the old world, for better or worse. Do you expect to gain the adherence of these millions all over the world by telling them that you are fighting for the status quo bellum, when that status quo meant slavery and misery for them? Do you expect to satisfy people's yearnings to be rid of this slavery by telling them that you will look into this matter when the war is over and won? That is not the path of wisdom and it comes very seriously in the way of winning the war itself.

It is obvious from your letter that you do not know what the Indian Congress has been saying and doing during the past dozen years. You accuse us of taking advantage of England's difficulty, of reviving civil disobedience, precisely at the time of your greatest peril after the fall of France. Every careful observer, English or Indian, knows that that is precisely what we did not do.

It was in December 1927 that we first laid down our policy in the event of war.[3] We stated that under no circumstance could we submit to being coerced into a war and this question must be decided by the people of India. Further that we could not join any imperialist war. This attitude was consistently held by us year after year. With the advent of Hitler and later, we condemned Nazism and all aggression—Japanese, Italian and German. But always we made it clear that the only way to deal with Nazi or other aggression was to do away with the earlier imperialist aggressions and to liquidate the Empire and replace it by freedom. We could never separate these two for to us they were twin brothers. And in any event, no policy which supported the old imperialism and attacked the new Nazi or fascist imperialisms could be logical or effective.

This warning we repeated time and again, year after year. It was not our fault that the wise people who sit in Whitehall or in Simla or Delhi did not attach importance to what we said. Then, a few months before the war started, we learnt that Indian troops had been sent overseas. We were taken aback and saw that this was a prelude to India being dragged into the war that seemed to be coming. We passed a resolution of course reiterating our old attitude to the

[3] See Volume II, Chapter IV, pp. 389–90.

war. But we did much more. In protest, we withdrew all our members from the Central Legislative Assembly at Delhi. We could not have made our attitude to war clearer and more emphatic. Yet ignoring all shades of Indian opinion, including our assemblies and provincial governments, the Viceroy declared by a fiat that the three hundred and seventy millions of India were at war.

A wave of anger passed through India and we were asked by our people to give effect to the Congress resolutions which had been repeatedly passed. We resisted this demand, we hesitated, we made every effort to avoid conflict, for the issues were of the gravest. There was no question before us of prestige. Where the fate of nations and the whole future of millions of people are involved, prestige is the cloak of fools and weaklings. We had to consider the future of our people in the context of world freedom. That we could not give up or bargain with just because the very crisis had arisen which might decide these mighty issues one way or the other. At no time could we give up the very essence of our being, the sheet-anchor to which we had held for so long; much less could we give it up when the necessity for holding on to it was greatest. We tried therefore to find a way out of the difficulty and to give the British Government a chance of retrieving their grievous error. We asked for a declaration of war aims in regard to Empire and imperialism and more especially in regard to Indian independence; also for implementing this to the utmost in the present.

Was that an unreasonable demand? We had not asked for anything which the British Government could not itself agree to, if it so chose, or anything that depends on the issue of the vast conflict that was going on, except very indirectly. Right in the middle of the war, the British Government has seen fit to proclaim the independence of Syria over which it has no dominion. But India which has so long been its own preserve, and about whose future no other power can have any say, must not be mentioned.

The British Government's answer to us was clear, definite, uncompromising. We withdrew our provincial ministers as they could not cooperate in a policy which was forced upon them from above. They were popular ministers answerable to their majorities in the Legislatures and to the electorate at large. They could not ignore their mandates and the will of the people who elected them.

Yet we took no other action and continued to seek ways of settlement, often to the great resentment of our own people. Every effort we made was thwarted by the Government of India or the British Government. Meanwhile our colleagues including many members of the Legislatures were being arrested in large numbers and often detained without trial. This was long before civil disobedience was started. Our organization was attacked in various ways and every disruptive tendency in India was encouraged. It is our belief that deliberate attempts were made to create conditions in India which could only lead to civil conflict on a wide scale. Our desire to avoid conflict with the British Government and our

attempts to restrain our people were contemptuously dismissed by Whitehall and Delhi and were considered to be obvious signs of weakness and incapacity to take any action.

Were we to look on passively and see our country go the way of ruin and all the dynamic and progressive elements in it crushed? That has not been our way and I hope it never will be. Even so the action we took in the shape of selected individual civil disobedience for a specific object (right of speech to declare our attitude towards the war) was such that it was meant to interfere as little as possible with the actual conduct of the war. Of course it attacked the moral basis of the war so far as India was concerned. This action was taken fourteen months after the war began and nearly five months after the fall of France.

You ask me what our answer would have been in the event of our having been previously consulted regarding India's participation in the war. Our answer would have been precisely what it has been, that is, we would have asked what we were fighting for, and we would have asked to be masters in our own house. You call this, strangely enough, trying to gain a tactical advantage and of having the satisfaction of paying off old scores against England. Is it part of the heavenly order that Britain should rule and exploit India? And is it satanic for us to want to free our country and get rid of the octopus of imperialism which has sucked us dry and made our poverty a byword among nations? How does our freedom lead to our callously sacrificing the interests of every other country to our own? I despair of understanding you or making you understand me. May I not say that even in this hour of peril Britain's ruling classes are prepared callously to sacrifice the interests of every other country, or even the masses of their own people, of a free world order, but on no account will they agree to give up their imperialist hold of and vested interests in India. Suppose, as you say, that India's attitude were to prove the last straw that turned the scale in favour of Germany, would not that be a terrible responsibility for the British Government and Britain's ruling classes? For that would mean that they prefer to risk defeat in this war, with all its terrible consequences, rather than give up willingly the domination of India. Am I not justified in saying that by this selfish and short-sighted policy, the British Government is playing into the hands of Hitler?

You compare us to the men of Vichy. I have been unable to grasp where the comparison comes in. But there does seem to me a possible comparison in regard to imperial policy between the men of Vichy and the British Government. Can there be anything more despicable than the talk of continuing to retain their Empire by these men of Vichy, who have betrayed and sold their own country to the enemy, and humiliated themselves and their great country beyond measure? The British Government has put up a magnificent fight against its enemies and all honour to the British people for their courage and endurance. But when the British Government talks of Empire, and it does so

frequently, something of the Vichy tone creeps in. Strange how this love of domination and Empire has entered the very blood of ruling classes, even though that Empire must cease to be. How it imperils the freedom of their own people for which they are so gallantly fighting.

It is not just a theoretical adherence to the cause of Indian independence that makes us put forward that demand not only now but for long years past, and refuse to tamper with what is called Dominion Status, and much less the promise of this in the distant hereafter. It is not theory with us, it is solid fact, for on it are based all our hopes of solving the terrible problems of poverty, unemployment, insecurity and widespread misery which have been the heritage of British rule. It is patent that the root cause of the disease cannot cure it by its own continuance. It is also obvious that we can never agree to being members of a group which treats us like helots in many of its homelands and which imposes all manner of disabilities on us in our own country.

But there is something more to it just now in war time. If this war was really India's war, it would be essential to stir the public imagination and harness popular goodwill and effort to it, as has been done in England. No wars can be fought effectively in the present age without that widespread popular cooperation. No foreign government, even if it were efficient, could possibly stir a people's imagination or gain their cooperation. That is an absolutely impossible task for the British Government in India for it is associated in the people's mind with two hundred years of travail and suffering and scores of national tragedies. You object to a casual mention I have made of Amritsar. But Amritsar is just an incident in a long and sorry record. Living in a world cut off from reality so far as India is concerned and getting their ideas from fantastic and one-sided accounts, the English people have no conception of what India is and how her people feel. If you go to the village and gain the confidence of the people, you will still hear songs and tales of the inhumanities perpetrated on them during the suppression of what has been called the Indian Mutiny.

How is one to eradicate this deep-seated racial consciousness of barbarous oppression and humiliation? How is one to change this widespread hostility into goodwill and cooperation? And unless this was done no war effort would be popular and effective. It was a very difficult task and it was not a question of some of us deciding to do this or that. We are not miracle workers. We are human beings working with the material we have got and in the historical setting in which fate has put us. Yet the task might have been attempted, but only on one condition: that some tremendous idea was realized giving a shock of pleasant surprise to the people. Only then could they get over their age-old complexes and hostility. That great idea, the realization of which was necessary from the point of view of the war, if no other, was the idea of Indian freedom and independence. That would have electrified the masses and produced an atmosphere in which great things were possible. Without such a psychological change, our efforts would have been largely individual and ineffective in any big

sense. With it, not only our own people would have been thrilled, but the whole world would have seen this war in a new perspective, realizing that imperialism had been laid low in its oldest and mightiest domain. Do you not think if this had taken place, a fresh wave of hope and enthusiasm would have coursed through all countries and all peoples and a vital difference made to the war?

There is yet another point to be considered. The present Government of India is notoriously inefficient in carrying out any new or big undertaking which lies outside the scope of its routine business. That routine business is to collect taxes and to repress people opposed to it. It is the perfect police state with the policeman's mentality behind it, and relying on a widespread secret service net-work, which might be compared to the Gestapo. Some individuals in the governmental framework may be good-intentioned or efficient, but the whole system is not only hostile to the Indian people, but incapable of big action in any constructive field. The fault is not so much of individuals as of the system and of the whole background and environment. The atmosphere which surrounds us in India and chokes us is wholly different from what you are used to in England. And this atmosphere and background inevitably lead to the deterioration of the individual officials who have to function in it. It is well–known how lamentably the British Government in India has failed to tackle any of the major problems of India—poverty, education, public health, industry, etc. They have not succeeded even in regard to defence which, from their own point of view, ought to have been important. They failed because they always functioned in a vacuum, and treated the Indian people as a hostile people inhabiting an invaded country.

Do you remember the famous Mesopotamia muddle of the last war when the Government of India came in for severe condemnation and castigation from a British Commission for its complete inefficiency and incompetence? The Minority Report of the Mesopotamia Inquiry Commission went even further and charged the then Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief in India with something much more serious than even error and incompetence. This report states: "it is precisely Lord Hardinge[4] and Sir Beauchamp Duff[5] whom I cannot merely charge with honest human error. Throughout their conduct of the war, they seem to me to have shown little desire to help and some desire actually to obstruct the energetic prosecution of the war." That was a very serious charge. But the fault lay not so much with any individual: it was the whole system which was rotten to the core. The British Government in India has been called (by an eminent Englishman) the refuge of fossilized traditionalism. It is a relic of ages gone by.

Do you expect these slow-witted and slow-moving representatives of an authoritarian tradition, living in the mental climate of the eighteenth century,

[4] (1858–1944); Viceroy of India, 1910–16.

[5] (1855–1918); Commander-in-Chief, India, 1913–16.

to do anything big in peace or war? Their whole past record is against it, and even the past twenty-two months of war have demonstrated how completely incapable they are of arranging effective help for the war. India can produce much that was needed at a great and ever-increasing pace. There is enormous room for expansion in her industry and nearly all the material for it is here. Only the goodwill and active assistance of the state was necessary. But that goodwill was lacking for the Government does not like the idea of Indian industry growing too big and perhaps, later on, challenging the hold of English financiers and industrialists in India. Even in war time, therefore, progress was checked and obstructed, and I have known cases when high Government officials frankly said that they did not wish to help Indian industry to compete with Imperial Chemicals and similar British concerns. These are not a politician's views. Hard-headed Indian businessmen, eager to expand Indian industry by manufacturing goods needed in war time, are full of resentment today at the treatment they have received.

One would have thought that in war time at least every encouragement would be given to the manufacture of automobiles, ships and aeroplanes. You know well how vastly important the last two are now.

Yet the Government has been obstructing these three and putting every conceivable difficulty in their way. Their treatment of Indian shipping has long been a public scandal. War or no war, they prefer to keep down the growth of Indian shipping lest this might come in the way later of the great British shipping lines. Most revealing of all was the way the Government of India dealt with an offer to start an aeroplane factory in India. Indian industrialists came to terms with a well-known American manufacturer (who has already set up such factories in China) for the manufacture in India of aeroplanes. All that was necessary was the permission of the Government of India. This permission was asked for in December 1939 by cable and it was stated that within nine months of the permission, aeroplanes could be supplied. No answer or even acknowledgment was received. Another cable was sent: still no answer. Months later a leisurely correspondence took place and the Government viewed the scheme with disfavour. Meanwhile war was raging in Europe and elsewhere and France had fallen and the cry was for more planes everywhere. Our Government took the cool air in Simla and was deaf to those vulgar noises.

It is astonishing that such things could be when the whole course of the war seemed to depend on planes and more planes. But then we have long ceased to be astonished at anything that the Government of India might do or, more often, might not do. It is in a class by itself and believes in masterly inactivity except where its own perquisites and privileges are concerned. There is nothing like it in the whole world and I am afraid we are not at all impressed by the pomp and circumstance that surround it. Resounding titles and amazingly high salaries and allowance do not necessarily signify competence or efficiency in India.

The whole official attitude to industrial development in India is further exemplified by the orders of Government prohibiting me from having any dealing in writing or otherwise from prison with the National Planning Committee of which I happen to be Chairman. This Committee which consisted of experts, industrialists, economists, engineers, etc., from all over India and on which various provincial governments were represented, had done very good work for two years through its twenty-nine sub-committees. We were just reaching the stage of drafting our report. My imprisonment naturally interfered with this work, but it might have been possible for me to help by drafting or revising other drafts. I was told I could do no such thing or have any dealings with the Planning Committee. The Committee, under the circumstances, is not functioning and its two years' labour cannot be taken advantage of just when the need was greatest.

This is the fossilized, slow-moving, devoid of ideas and energy, and out-of-date structure of government that is perpetuated in India, both in the Central Government and in the provinces. We were asked to function under it and accept its general direction when we knew that this direction was entirely wrong, and indeed was hardly a direction, or any movement at all. It was just sitting still and carrying on as before, occasionally having the sensation of movement. This was not our way of running a war or of meeting a world situation pregnant with revolutionary possibilities. Can you expect intelligent people full of ideas and brimming over with the desire to carry them out, to yoke themselves to this medieval chariot? Quite apart from our desire for freedom, the necessities of the war itself demanded that this chariot should be scrapped and a more modern and swiftly moving conveyance take its place.

The Government of India and the provincial governments as at present constituted (which means an autocratic Viceroy and autocratic governors) are no doubt interested in the war and desire to help, but their limbs through long inaction cannot move and their minds can only function in set grooves. They are afraid of the very people whose cooperation they demand, and spend all their energy in police and secret service activities to suppress them. Unfortunately the war and the international situation are far from running in set grooves. And in any event, war is a secondary question for our rulers: the first question for them, as always for an authoritarian government, is to put down those who criticize them or oppose them. To arrest and imprison, with or without trial, increase their jails, have special concentration camps and the like. In spite of our discouragement of indiscriminate jail going and only selected persons being allowed to do so, there are, I think, about 25,000 or more political prisoners in India at present. There are also large numbers of others who are arrested and kept as common criminals without even a formal trial. The treatment accorded to both prisoners and detenus has shocked people in India. It is cruel, vindictive and full of meanness and pettiness. We do not complain of suffering: that has

been our lot for long years now. There is an infinity of suffering in the world today and death has cast its grim shadow over millions. But deliberate and calculated cruelty to helpless people in prison is not a pleasant thought to contemplate, and it shows up the mentality of those who govern us and creates bitterness, the consequences of which it is terrible to contemplate. In a recent speech President Roosevelt said that freedom from cruelty and inhuman treatment is a natural right. It is not a grace to be given or withheld at will by those temporarily in a position to exert force over defenceless people. Our present rulers evidently do not believe in this doctrine.

Sir Reginald Maxwell, the Home Member of the Government of India, has publicly stated that he would in any event give preference to German and Italian internees in India rather than to Indian internees and detenus (those kept in concentration camps without charge or trial) the great majority of whom, according to him, being indecent and utterly worthless persons.

This is the atmosphere we live in. Do you expect us to cooperate with these people who, on their own showing, prefer Nazism and fascism to Indian freedom? According to whom those who labour for India's freedom and a change in the social order are the scum of society who must be crushed? We think differently, and nothing in the world, and no fear of consequences, will induce us to cooperate with a government which is truly represented by Sir Reginald Maxwell and his kind. This is something we cannot do. Whatever the future may hold, there is no going back for us to the old order, no submission to British authoritarianism and totalitarianism in war or peace.

That future is dark for all of us the world over. You have yourself pointed out that the victorious Allies will give short shrift to us and will no doubt endeavour to crush us. If Hitler or Stalin had their way, it is quite possible that men like me would find ourselves ranged along a wall, facing a firing squad. We have no illusions on either count, and no expectation from the Allies or others. We have long learnt the lesson that nations are made through their own efforts and through suffering and self-reliance. Whatever disasters there may be in store for us of the present generation, India will survive as she has survived in her long past many of those who sought to do her injury. The only wound that is difficult to heal is the self-inflicted one, when we forget our principles and our country's honour, when we betray the cause we have pledged ourselves to further. All other wounds are temporary and heal, and though we may not live to see that process, others will take our place and carry on the good work.

It was no boast I made when I said that we will shift for ourselves and do not need the so-called protection of the British Army and Navy. I did not mean that suddenly we shall build up a military machine capable of resisting successfully Hitler's hordes or any other major army that might invade India. I know that the British have made us incapable of doing this for the present and in the near future: and, indeed, in the process have made themselves incapable also.

We do not want the British army in India because it is not here to defend our rights and liberties but to suppress them. It is always an army of occupation in conquered territory. At present instead of offering an adequate defence to a major invasion, it is more of a danger and an invitation for this. So long as it remains it will prevent us from acquiring the capacity to defened ourselves. It is only after it goes that we shall begin moving in the right direction.

I am not a pacifist or a conscientious objector, though I hate war with all my mind and heart and I am convinced that no civilized life can function in the world of the future unless war is ended. To that end of abolishing war by establishing a political and social order which does not lead to periodic wars, as the present order does, I trust India will address herself in common with other countries. I do not believe that war is something inevitable or a biological necessity. But I do believe that it is inevitable under the present political and social system in the world. Therefore this system must be changed.

Still I am not pacifist. If I had been an Englishman I have no doubt that I would have taken my part in defending my country against invasion. Even so I would not have done it as a mere upholder of the status quo but as one demanding fundamental changes. As an Indian, if unfortunately necessity arises for it in the independent India of the future, I shall help in building up efficient defence services. But that future is yet distant and a great deal will happen to us all before we reach it. In the present we are incapable of offering effective armed resistance in India to a foreign invader. But do not delude yourself into thinking that this means surrender by us. If we have to face such a contingency, we shall not give in, as a great armed nation like France and so many other smaller nations have given in. We shall die, peaceful defiant and unyielding, and Hitler has yet to find a weapon which can subdue the spirit of man which refuses to bow down or submit. True, in spite of all this, India may be invaded and occupied. Everybody is not a hero. Even so we shall not submit and our case, in any event, will be better than that of France, and we shall find regeneration sooner. Do not imagine that a human being can retain his dignity and self-respect only by brandishing a sword. The wielder of the sword, we have seen too often, surrenders before a bigger sword.

No, we are not satisfied with a policy for India of "Sinn Fein—Ourselves alone." We have never believed in a narrow nationalism, although it would have been natural enough for us to do so after our cruel subjection of nearly two hundred years. We have dreamt of and worked for a new world of which India would be a free and equal partner. We would gladly agree to the abolition of national sovereignties on that basis. For us the problem of India is a part of the larger problem which includes China and the rest of Asia, Europe, America, Africa, and the present war. But it does not mean for us the preservation and condition of the British Empire or any other empire, or the subjection of one people by another. Would it not be more true to say that the British

Government is following, very foolishly, the policy of "Ourselves alone" and "Our Empire" at all costs? Why can they not give up this evil thing that is imperialism but continue to hold on to it, even as the men of Vichy do, whatever befall? A time will come when the passions of today have subsided, when the people of England and other peoples will realize and recognize the service that India is rendering, in the midst of war's horror and tumult, to the larger cause of human freedom.

Is the British attitude to Empire today your interpretation of English thought and English history and struggles for freedom in the past? It is not ours, and perhaps we are carrying on that tradition now far more than you are, though you are defending your own freedom with magnificent courage and fortitude. But freedom is not a monopoly of England and Europe. It is dear to us also: dearer because you have deprived us of it. We can compromise about anything but not about our freedom and independence. What would you think of England if she compromised away her own freedom and honour? We are human beings also with the same urges and desires. To ask us to present this claim or that for the beneficent consideration of England, now or later, is to insult us. India is not an appendage of England, even though we may have been forcibly subjected to her rule for many years. India is a great country with a magnificent tradition, with resources, with ability, and a will now to freedom which nothing in the world will finally overcome.

Have we failed you in the hour of your trial? In so, is not that itself a judgement on the long record of British rule in India? That rule itself has created the conditions which led to that failure. But may it not be said that it is your Government that failed not only us, but the British people and the world at large? What a magnificent opportunity it had to cut itself away from the chains of imperialism and give leadership to the world! But it chose otherwise, and may we not say that it is bitter for us to think that even in the hour of supreme peril, the British Government not only failed us but the great cause to which it had given lip sympathy?

I do not blame the British people and I am full of admiration for their heroism and fortitude during the past year of horror. I hope they will survive successfully through this terrible ordeal. But sorrow fills me that all this magnificent courage should not have been yoked to a right cause which would have inspired the world. England's Government must shoulder a heavy responsibility for this; and who can judge how much this has affected, and will affect in future, the course of the war?

In this hour of supreme trial for all of us wherever we might be, when death overshadows everything, and the future is dark with unimagined perils, every person must search his or her conscience from day to day and seek to be guided to right thought and right action. I have searched my conscience time and again, and I hope my colleagues and I have the courage to retrace a step if

subsequent thought proves it to be wrong. We have done that in the past; our great leader has never hesitated to do so, whatever the consequences and even if this has brought public disapproval in its train. In past years sometimes I have been in doubt about the correctness of a step taken and I have, through pain and anguish, struggled within myself. But during the past eight months I have never doubted that we did the right thing—there was no other way for us. It was not only logically straight and correct and in perfect tune with our policy and declaration; it was right also for reasons which transcend logic. And, therefore, in spite of the horror that surrounds us and increases in intensity, my mind has been strangely at peace. You would not have me, I am sure, give up what I believe in from the innermost core of my being; just as I cannot ask you to do any such thing. For to give up what we believe in can never be right. And so, even if we think differently and act differently, let us at least give credit for sincerity to the other and hope that the future might bring our thoughts and actions more in line with each other.

I have written to you at very great length and in all frankness. You must forgive me both for the length of this letter and for anything in it that might distress you. For nearly eight months now I have been in prison and have naturally felt bottled up. When I started writing this letter my pen flowed on and I could not easily restrain it. I felt also that I owed it to you and to myself to let you see what I had in my mind. Whether you and other friends agree with me or not, you should at least know how we feel and what are, for us, the springs of action.

I do not know whether this letter will reach you. A prisoner can only hand a letter to the Superintendent of the Prison.

Sincerely yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

6

Hostility Towards Britain[1]

9 November 1941

Dear Miss Rathbone,

Your letter of August 28th reached me a few days ago. I have not yet received the copy of *Hansard* and your book on India which you have been good enough to send me.[2] Some time ago I read a book by you on India. I do not know if this same book has been sent by you or another.

You mention in your letter that you have come to the conclusion that there seems to be an unbridgeable gulf between us, and that my "hostility" is likely to be unchangeable because its roots are in the unchangeable past. I think you are right and it is some gain, at any rate, that this fact is realized. We start from different premises and aim at different objectives, though there may be much in common in belief in freedom, democracy and social progress. It is exceedingly difficult, under these circumstances, for us to convince or convert each other and it is hardly proper for me too take up your time by writing a long and argumentative letter. But there are a few matters you have mentioned to which I should also like to refer.

My "hostility" to the system that has existed in India under British rule is complete, and yet I have tried, not without success, to distinguish between that system and the British people. I think that this system, like all such systems, has been, and is, an evil. Out of evil sometimes some good may come, but it remains nevertheless evil and its net result is injurious. I have largely succeeded in separating in my mind the system from individuals or the British people generally, because I have many dear and intimate friends in England, because also of my knowledge of English literature and my appreciation of many aspects of the English way of life. I have been fortunate and somewhat unusual in gaining these friendships and knowledge. Very very few of my countrymen have had that advantage and you can well imagine that the factors that tone down my hostility do not affect the vast majority of people here. I have often had to plead with them not to let their hostility apply to persons or the English people. That

[1] To Eleanor F. Rathbone, JN Correspondence, NMML.

[2] *Child Marriage: The Indian Minotaur* (published in 1934).

widespread and deep-rooted hostility is the background in India. Is it surprising? Try to place yourself, though it must be difficult to do so, in the position of an Indian. Or try to imagine a foreign government established in England. Your whole mind and soul would rebel against this.

Do not imagine that the Congress organization has a monopoly of this hostility. You may be surprised to find that among the leading personalities of the Congress there is far less of ill will than among others. We may not have come up to the mark but all of us have been influenced, in a greater or lesser degree, by Mr. Gandhi's continuing emphasis on an absence of ill will. You will find this hostility against British rule everywhere, in Hindu or Muslim or Sikh in India. The members of the Muslim League are as full of it as anyone else. The humble peasant and his landlord share it, the mill-worker and his capitalist employer both feel it. Even the Indian princes are full of it, though they may not express it. If you will glance through any detailed history of India under British rule, you will read many government minutes, generation after generation, emphasizing this widespread hostility. In the present war crisis there are some individuals and groups who are apparently cooperating with the British effort in India. That cooperation may be right or wrong but it is certainly not based on an absence of hostility. It is usually based on a desire or a hope to gain some advantage for their group; or a fear that political or social changes might affect their vested interests. At the most, it may be said, that the general and wide-spread hostility to British rule is occasionally overcome by a more powerful, though temporary, hostility to another group.

That is the extraordinary, though not unnatural, position in India after many generations of British rule, and that might well be considered the judgement of the Indian people on that rule. The unchangeable past pursues us, as it does everyone, but it is not the past that ultimately influences our actions but the present, for that present seems to us to be a reflection and a continuation of the past. It is always difficult to get rid of the past but it can be done—by a break from it. Unless that definite break comes, we cannot shed it. It is we who want the break and it is the British Government that clings to the past, which is so hateful to us.

As we grow older, most of us, I suppose, believe in the inevitability of gradualness where human progress is concerned. We are an old race and we have six thousand years of culture and civilization, with all their ups and downs and joys and sorrows in our blood and our bones. We know all about patience and gradualness, for we have been in the habit of measuring human progress not just by material achievements, valuable as they are, but by more enduring values. To raise an individual, a community, a nation, in any real and fundamental sense, requires patience and ceaseless and often long-continued effort. A political change at the top may mean nothing at all unless it has a social and economic background in harmony with it.

But gradualness has its obvious dangers as history has repeatedly shown. You cannot be gradual in putting out a fire that is consuming your house; you cannot be gradual in meeting the menace of a flood. You cannot be gradual in modern war, or else you will be overwhelmed. Gradualness has led to the bloody revolutions you mention for the changes would not come in time, and nature, in its wasteful way, had a human earthquake which shattered an old and effete system to bits. Individuals apart, and surely individuals however important they might be at a particular moment are but symbols of other forces, is it not true to say that the present ghastly and terrible war is a result of gradualness, of inability to get out of the old ruts, the old ways of thought, and of evolving new ways to meet the new conditions of life? How much of the responsibility for this failure must be shouldered by statesmen who were so enamoured of gradualness as to blind themselves to the inevitability of change?

During the last two or three generations there have been enormous changes all over the world. Many countries have changed beyond recognition. I need not give a list of these countries for you know them well. Only in India we have still the background of the eighteenth or the early nineteenth century. During these hundred years and more, even England with her conservative traditions has undergone vital changes. Europe is entirely different. The United States of America have emerged as the wealthiest and industrially the most developed country in the world. We remain more or less where we were and even the minor changes that have come, have emphasized the retention of the various steel frames which have encased India during the entire period of British rule.

Again, gradualness in human progress may be unavoidable. But even that gradualness depends on a certain environment which helps progress. If that environment is absent and if, on the other hand, the surrounding factors are all brakes and impediments to progress, then gradualness does not begin functioning, except incidentally and because of the inherent tendency for change in human society. National freedom and the opportunities for self-growth and development that accompany it, are essential prerequisites for progress, gradual or otherwise. The conception of gradualness cannot apply to national freedom, except possibly in rare cases where very backward people are concerned, though even there I would hesitate to apply it. It is absurd to think of it in connection with India, and astonishing that any Britisher should advance this argument after a century and three quarters of British rule. Does time stop running when Britain rules over another country and must changes then be reckoned in geological terms? India is not a land colonized by the British people, gradually learning from the mother country how to step forward, and thus developing into a dominion. We do not look to England as a mother country. We are a mother country ourselves and the vigorous progeny of our mind have been scattered over Asia for two thousand years or more and yet look to India as a mother country.

You are right in saying that many Indians are "gradualist" in regard to social reform and that urgent reforms are necessary. Yet many are not gradualist even in regard to that. But nearly all feel that effective and far-reaching social reform is bound up with political freedom and more food to eat. Without political power to give effect to social reform, reformist energies are largely wasted. Political subjection inevitably leads to social stagnation and an alien ruling class looks to reactionary elements for support and therefore encourages them. Hence the vital energies of the nation are largely concentrated in the struggle for political freedom. Even so the question of raising the depressed classes and the ending of untouchability have been made essential planks in our national movement and I am sure that they are nearing solutions. In regard to the status and rights of women, the Congress has wholly identified itself with their demands for equality. Apart from this theoretical adherence, the national movement has brought about a widespread awakening among women and this is the real and permanent basis for all reform. Purdah is on its last legs, except to some extent among the Muslims, but even they have been affected.

One of the most important of the sub-committees of the National Planning Committee was the one of women's role in planned economy. This sub-committee consisted entirely of Indian women well-known in the women's movement. They worked hard and started branches in many parts of India for investigation as well as propaganda. They produced ultimately a report embracing practically all the problems relating to women and made far-reaching recommendations. But their work, like the work of the parent body, came to a sudden stop owing to the policy adopted by the government.

You are surprised at my comparing British viceroys and governors in India with Hitler's *Gauleiters*. I am afraid I still see no difference in the extent of authoritarian powers each of these possesses. In theory, therefore, there is no difference whatever. In practice the difference will naturally vary with individuals as well as with the political exigencies of a particular situation. India, for all her weakness, has developed strength and cannot easily be treated in the *Gauleiter* way. Yet in essence the system functions in that way, especially during a crisis and racial arrogance is still very much in evidence in India. In a strongly-entrenched system the individual is just a cog in a machine. In private life a policeman or a jail official may be cultured or humane; yet that same man becomes an inhuman and unfeeling robot when functioning as a part of a machine whose chief aim is repression. That applies to the whole of officialdom, from the highest to the lowest, in a police state such as India is even today. Only a prisoner knows how a prison official behaves in the prison.

I have recently read a book dealing with English prisons. There was a sentence in it which struck me for it had a larger application. "Basically, the English jailer's reaction to any crisis is to abolish immediately and illegitimately all the prison reforms of the last fifty years—in crisis the jail goes swiftly back to normal, and the pretty phrases of the reformers are seen for what they are."

That is exactly what happens in India during a crisis, not in the jails only but in the whole system of administration. We revert to normal, and the normal here is the authoritarian and police rule of the Indian Civil Service. It is significant how easily the Indian administration reverted to the procedure and practices of the nineteenth century as soon as the constitution was suspended in a number of provinces two years ago. It is immaterial whether the Congress was right or wrong in withdrawing its ministries. The assemblies remained, the members who had been elected by their respective constituencies were still there. A fresh election was possible. But the Civil Service had had enough of this democratic foolery, as it no doubt considered it, and wanted to go back to normal. The ease and rapidity of the reversion showed what, in the minds of the ruling groups, was the normal and the permanent background. Everything else was superficial which could be swept away when it became a nuisance. In view of this, was our criticism of the 1935 Act or other so-called reforms wanting in justification?

I realize that the mood of the British people has undergone a great change as a result of the war and the dangers and disasters that this has brought. But I have entirely failed to see any real change in their mood or reactions to India and her problems. So far as the Government of India is concerned, I am convinced that even the war has not changed their mentality in the slightest. Possibly they mean well. But it is distressing for intelligent men and women to have to deal with and to be subjected to a group of unintelligent and slow-thinking individuals whom nothing can wake to reality. I should have thought that the exigencies of modern warfare, if nothing else, required a swift transition from the nineteenth to the middle of the twentieth century.

The fundamental policy, according to you, pervading my letter seems to be its assumption that I speak for India and the Indian people as a whole. I made no such claim. I speak for myself only, though I imagine that a great many people agree with me. Probably you would not trouble to write to me if you did not think that I had a certain representative character. It is obvious that in every country there are all manner of difference of opinion on political, social and economic questions. Are you free from these differences in England? Would you say that a country where there are such differences should be subjected to alien rule? In the United States of America there is a strong and aggressive body of opinion disagreeing with President Roosevelt's policy and trying to prevent him, as far as they can, from leading his country to war. That is a very vital issue today and probably behind this difference of opinion lie deeper differences. I have no doubt that you deplore this isolationist attitude as you have every right to. But you do not say that President Roosevelt and his Government should cease to function because various groups do not agree with them.

I do not and cannot ignore the problems that face us in India. But I know also that many of these problems have been created and aggravated by British policy. That policy has created all manner of special and vested interests in India

and now we are told that the British Government cannot betray or desert their interests. What would you say if the Japanese Government pointed out that they were committed to the up-keep of Wang Ching-wei's[3] puppet regime in Nanking? What a tangle the British Government has got itself into by its amazing ineptitude in the past and its attempts to play off one group against the other and instead of trying to unravel this, it goes on adding knot after knot to it! We have suffered because of this but probably the ultimate injury to England has been more far-reaching. I do not wish to discuss British policy in India or elsewhere and whether it has been honourable or not. We are likely to differ completely on this question. I am not responsible for all the absurd and injurious commitments the British Government has made in the past in spite of opposition in India; yet I cannot help having to face some of the consequences of these commitments. The only test I can apply is this: what is right and proper for and advantageous to the vast majority of the Indian people, without being harmful or unjust to any group or body of opinion? When there is conflict of interests, those of the masses must prevail.

That is evidently not the test which the British Government applies. For my part, my honour is pledged to the Indian people and to the cause of Indian freedom, and if the British Government is pledged to something else, I regret it and come into conflict with it.

I do not see where the question of betrayal or desertion of anybody comes in, except the betrayal of democracy and freedom in India. Nor is there a question of a capitulation to any political party. The Congress has not claimed any power or privilege for itself or its supporters. We have stood for the independence and the complete freedom of India and the right of the Indian people to determine their destiny, without any interference from Britain or anyone else. Is that a party claim? Indians may differ among themselves on any number of matters, but if there are any Indians who are opposed to independence and freedom, and want foreign bayonets to protect these particular privileges, do they differ in any way from those who are now called quislings and used to be known by other hard names?

It is easily conceivable that the British Empire may fade away and cease to exist, and that the British Government may not continue as a coercive apparatus in India. What happens then to us? I do not know. But the obvious thing to do is for the people of India of choose their representatives who should meet and try to come to an amicable and enduring agreement, whatever that may be, and should also help in establishing a juster and more satisfactory international

[3] (1884–1944); follower of Sun Yat-sen and political rival of Chiang Kai-shek; unsuccessfully attempted to assassinate the Prince Regent before the Revolution of 1911; exiled in 1926; abandoned the Kuomintang Government and became head of the Japanese puppet regime in Nanking in 1940.

order. They may fail to do so, or they might succeed only after much travail and suffering.

You mention the example of Ireland.[4] Surely this is a dangerous parallel from another point of view. India is a much tougher proposition than Ireland was.

Sincerely yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

[4] She wrote: "May I remind you that our experience over Ireland and the Treaty Ports has not exactly encouraged that kind of act of faith. Nor, if I may say so, does the whole tone of your letter, your book, and the utterances of others of your party. These rather breathe a hostility which is likely to be unchangeable because its roots are in the unchangeable past."

7

Different Worlds[1]

21 November 1941

My dear Wedgwood,

Your letter of the 1st August and the copy of *Hansard* reached me a few days ago. I read the report of the debate given in *Hansard* with interest, for it is always interesting to observe the working of people's minds. But the proceedings in the House of Commons seemed to me far away, not only distant in space but even more so in the vast spaces of the mind, unreal and unrelated to India or to me, although you were good enough to mention my name several times in the course of your speech. What am I to say about it? There is a world to say or to write and yet the window of understanding will remain closed abroad. Only the inescapable tragedy of events will probably open that window, not words or arguments. We agree about many things, but where India is concerned and British rule in India, we live in different worlds. What is basically right for you is fundamentally wrong for me.

In my last letter to you I did not, deliberately, refer to Indian problems. I did not wish to argue with you where our premises were entirely different and, for my part, I have little interest left in the proceedings of the British Parliament in relation to India or in what the British Government does or does not here. I am interested in the people of India. If there is any stuff in them, they will make good; otherwise not. We have pulled through five or six thousand years and faced many crises and distress, and possibly we may yet survive both Hitlerism and the British Empire. British rule in India is after all just an episode in our long history, a very unsavoury episode, I think. We do not grow hysterical, easily and we try to be courteous and gentle in our approach even to our professed opponents. There are those five or six thousand years behind us and they have taught us much in the way of human behaviour. We appreciate friendship and goodwill wherever we find it. It is a hard and harsh world and the deserts of hatred and greed and violence are continually encroaching on the civilization that man has built through the ages. We have to be thankful for the oases of friendship that come our way.

[1] To Josiah C. Wedgwood, JN Correspondence, NMML.

And so because I consider you a brave and gallant man and a friend, I refrained from entering into an argument with you over matters on which we are not likely to agree for some time at least. But I do not want to be misunderstood and I fear that, judging from your speech in the Commons, there has been some misunderstanding. Of course I do not want to do anything to injure the British people, and, more specially, I do not want to do anything to bring down those ideals of freedom for which the British people have sometimes stood in their own history. But they have also stood for, and stand today, in spite of all that has happened, for imperialist domination and exploitation and with that my relation can only be that of an unrelenting opponent. In saying so I am naturally thinking of India, but I have long outgrown the narrowness of nationalism and the problem of India for me is only a part of the world problem. I do not think it is possible, and I certainly do not think it is desirable, to have in the future a host of so-called independent national states warring against each other by arms or in the economic sphere, or in a state of armed truce. I am convinced that the freedom and salvation of India is good for the world and even for England in the larger sense. The alternative is not a continuation, in varying shapes or degrees, of present conditions in India, as most of the sapient experts on India in the House of Commons seem to imagine, but a catastrophe in which India may go down, and in going down might pull England also into the abyss.

I admire Winston Churchill for his ability and courage and determination and I admire the British people for the spirit they have shown in the defence of their own freedom. But that admiration does not lead me to accept the British Prime Minister's dictation in regard to India. You have referred to the morale of the Russians. Since you wrote they have given us astonishing examples of reckless bravery and sacrifice. You admire that, I am sure, as I do, yet that has not converted you to communism. And so, in so far as British rule in India is concerned, my admiration for what the British people may be doing in their own country does not make any difference to my reactions or make me an admirer of the British Empire. I have been a rebel against that rule and am likely to continue as such till either that rule goes, or I go. It is intolerable for me that I should have to carry out the decisions or orders of governors or viceroys or secretaries of state. What are these governors today, even according to British Constitutional theory and usage? They are usurpers displacing the elected provincial legislatures and governing autocratically with the help of armed forces. It is absurd to say that the Congress governments struck work and gave us the job. They refused to carry on unless they could do so in their own way and in accordance with the wishes of their electorate. No self-respecting government could have done otherwise. Yet you say in your speech that each province in India is as self-governing as each United State in America—an astonishing statement. Did you forget all the special powers of the Governor and the Viceroy? And the mortgaging of a great part of the revenues of this

province? And the privileged position of the services (with all their authoritarian traditions) which could not be touched in any way, however incompetent and unsuitable and expensive they might be? And the totally irresponsible Central Government behind it all?

You seem to think that all or most of us acted in a huff and are repenting of our folly, and that if we are told to behave like good children we shall mend our ways. Is that not rather naive? If you think that we do not count for much and our attempts are doomed to failure, why worry about us? I should like to tell you that I have never been so sure of any decision in my life as of this one and nothing has happened to induce me to change my views. Indeed I have been more confirmed in them by subsequent events, more especially the arrogant attitude of the British governing apparatus in India. There is some talk of my release from prison. I am not interested in it. But I think it only fair to Mr. Amery and to myself that he should know what my views are. Mr. Gandhi has, fortunately, made the Congress position clear.

You do not seem to like Mr. Gandhi though you have a partiality for me. It is good of you to speak generously of me; perhaps what I have written will lead you to revise your opinion about my statesmanship. As a matter of fact I am in entire agreement with Mr. Gandhi in regard to the political policy which the Congress has adopted at his instance. I am no pacifist as he is and I am not in entire agreement with his economic outlook. And yet this very war has shown that we shall have to think differently in many matters if we are to set aright this world. Anyway I am at present concerned with his policy in the political field and with that I wholly concur.

You suggest that I might go to England and shake hands and all that. I am always prepared to shake hands but that does not take one far. I have no desire whatever to go to England for I expect nothing from the ruling groups there. Probably only the hard blows that we are all receiving and the harder blows to come will forge our respective countries into something more worthwhile than in the past.

In August 1940 I wrote an article called *The Parting of the Ways* which subsequently appeared in a book— *The Unity of India* published in London. I said in this that my hope that the silken bonds of the spirit should continue between India and England has been shattered. That was no empty phrase for me. I felt it deeply and I was very sad about it. For I had thought that the very urgency of the peril would shake us out of our old ruts. The hour had struck and urgent and vital questions were hurled at us from all the points of the earth. We put some of these questions to the ruling authorities in England. There was no answer, only a reception of the old shibboleths. The petrification of mind and system had gone too far there for any understanding even of these problems and questions. How terribly England had deteriorated because of her imperialistic dominion over India?

I am afraid I have no high opinion of the statesmen of England. I do not look to them for any vision or brave step towards a new world. Perhaps events will teach them as well as all of us.

Forgive me for the length of this letter. I do not want to write all this but I must try to remove wrong impressions. We must at least try to understand each other's viewpoint even though we are unable to agree.

Yours ever,
Jawaharlal Nehru

8

The Indian Situation[1]

It is difficult to simplify complex issues which have their roots in the distant past and which involve not only far-reaching political and economic structures but also the psychological and emotional outlook of a whole people. A purely political analysis of present-day phenomena may be helpful to some extent, but it does not carry us far as it ignores the really important factors that govern the situation. In a country under foreign rule the dominating passion is to be rid of that rule at almost any cost. This passion, natural and inevitable as it is, often prevents an adequate consideration of wider issues. In India thus the dominating passion, regardless of parties and differences of political opinions, is for independence and the ending of British rule and every kind of political and economic control from outside. Almost this passion amounts to a kind of religious faith. The National Congress represents this clearly and unequivocally; other organizations, including the Muslim League, are also pledged to independence; even Indian officials and army officers serving the British Government think in these terms though they may not express themselves openly.

Dominion Status, whatever that may mean, has been rejected by the public mind, although it has never been offered. The reasons for rejection are many, but the main one is that it is considered a subterfuge for retaining economic control and protecting British vested interests in India against Indian interests. India is not an appendage or growth of Britain, like Canada or Australia, and even today Indians are treated as helots and sometimes racially segregated in the British Dominions. To be associated with this British Empire, unless that Empire ceases to be an empire, is an idea which Indians cannot tolerate, for inevitably it means an inferior and subordinate status. At the same time it has been repeatedly stated that India does not want an isolated independence. We do not believe this is possible for any nation in the future and we should like to work for larger federations, and ultimately a world federation of free nations. We have no objection to an alliance with Britain on equal terms or to joining a group of nations of which Britain also is a member. But we see no reason why

[1] Delhi, 14 February 1942. Note given to Madame Chiang Kai-shek and Hollington Tong, China's Vice-Minister of Information, who were on a visit to India at this time. JN Papers, NMML.

we should be limited to the British group. Our attraction is much more towards closer association with China and some other nations, and this attraction is growing. If England joins a group containing India and China, we have no objection.

We must not be slaves of words, but at the same time words cannot be ignored for they carry bundles of ideas. Thus the words "independence" and "Dominion Status" create certain powerful reactions on the public mind, the former favourable, the latter unfavourable. But words, after all, are not so important and what really counts is the reality behind those words. That reality is the full transference of power into the hands of elected representatives of the Indian people. We have arrived at a stage when a partial transference is of little good to anybody and leads to an unstable government with two or more groups pulling in different directions. A semi-transfer would especially be undesirable in the war crisis today. It would not be accepted for one thing. Apart from this, it would aggravate our other problems, many of which are of British creation.

This is an important aspect of the question. So long as even partial British control remains, disruptive and reactionary elements in the country will look to it and will continually give trouble. The main energy of a new government will be given to dealing with these elements and even so it will not be able to settle the problem satisfactorily, for the British elements will be intriguing with them. We have had disastrous experience of this in the past as well as in the present. Only when all alien control is out of the picture and every group and individual knows that it cannot rely on outsiders, will it be possible to settle internal problems satisfactorily.

It is said that a change-over in the midst of a war crisis is a risky business and may lead to an upsetting of even the present effort. There is of course that risk for every major change involves a risk and the ending of an old-established foreign-dominated structure of government will undoubtedly release new forces and produce new problems. But that risk has to be taken, indeed not to do so is to drift inevitably to disaster. If one thing is certain it is this: the British Government in India is completely incapable of dealing with the situation and has made a hopeless mess of it. Its prestige is at vanishing point and even its own officers and officials have lost all faith in it. It is bitterly disliked by the people and those who serve it, in the army or otherwise, have a feeling of being mercenaries. It is likely that in the future it may have to concentrate more on the big cities and ports and leave the vast number of villages in the rural areas to shift for themselves. Thus British rule will fade away from the greater part of India without giving place then to any ordered government. That will have its dangers and it is our effort now to organize the rural areas in order to preserve order.

Industrial production, though it has gone up considerably in India, has not developed as it should have done because of British opposition to the building up of new industries in India which might conflict with British interests in the

future. It is amazing how even war interests have been sacrificed to this. Indian industrialists, financiers, scientists and economists are full of dissatisfaction. Indian workers are also dissatisfied and as a result of possible danger from air raids are leaving factories in the threatened areas. They have no national motive or urge as they would have if they realized that their freedom or the freedom of the country was involved. Food scarcity is growing and is likely to cause trouble.

Only a national government, and only the realization that freedom had come to us and we were fighting to preserve it, can possibly meet this situation adequately. Such a realization would immediately release vast energy and enthusiasm among the people and a cheerful acceptance of the perils and risks involved.

At present there is a great deal of fellow-feeling and sympathy for China, largely due to continuous propaganda on behalf of the Congress. But it is undoubted that the major feeling is one of anger and distrust of the British Government and their reverses in the war give to many people in India, who do not and cannot appreciate the larger issues, a feeling of satisfaction. Japan, though not at all liked, gains some sympathy because it is teaching the British a lesson. The differential treatment given to Indian officers and soldiers and the offensive way in which the British authorities have dealt with them has led to minor mutinies in the Indian army.

The Indian demand has been a recognition of India's independence and the right of the Indian people to draw up their own constitution through their own elected representatives. The future relations of India and England to be settled by representatives of both parties meeting them and considering all mutual problems. In practice this would mean the recognition being given immediately and a national government being set up. It would not mean a break with England as anyhow the change-over will take time and the manner of it will depend on circumstances. The use of the words "Dominion Status" will confuse the issue and create opposition in many influential circles in India. It is better therefore to avoid using such words. What may be said is that a full transference of power should take place and the situation as it exists in Canada, etc., should be immediately aimed at in India—with this proviso that India's right to independence and to the framing of its constitution should be recognized. Further steps can be taken with mutual consultation.

India's struggle for freedom has inevitably gone on in some form or other ever since the British invasion and aggression. It has taken the form of a major rebellion and many minor revolts; of constitutional action and long pleading and argument with the British Government; of direct action and indirect action; of violent methods and peaceful ones; we have tried all these and at last we adopted the peaceful technique of direct action on a mass scale. We did so because it appealed to us and also because no other effective means were open

to us. This technique, though not always spectacular, has brought us rich results already.

This technique of peaceful action was confined by us to our struggle for national freedom against the British Government. It did not apply to defence against foreign invasion, nor did it lay down how we would behave as a free country. But Mr. Gandhi's pacifist views and his towering position as India's leader influenced our whole movement and many people. They did not become pacifists, yet the logic of events made them realize the difficulty of our adopting any other course without long preparation.

When the European war began in September 1939 the Congress Working Committee issued a long statement[2] dated 14th September 1939 defining national policy. This is an important document as it governs that policy still. It is given on p. 14 of the booklet *Congress and War Crisis*. Since then the policy of the British Government has been so amazingly offensive and hostile and at the same time so thoroughly inefficient and incompetent in every department that feeling in India has hardened greatly and become uncompromising except on the basis of full freedom.

If we had had a chance two and a half years ago we might have built up a great war machine, a great industrial machine, and produced large quantities of aeroplanes, etc. That chance was denied us and now it is extraordinarily difficult to catch up and think in terms of producing trained armies within a few months. The reaction therefore is that it is safer (and apparently the only possible course left to us in the immediate future) not to think of any effective military resistance but rather to build up other forms of resistance against foreign invasion. If the Indian armies in Malaya, Singapore and Burma on the one side, and in the Middle East on the other side are defeated, then from a military point of view not much is left for effective defence in India itself, and new armies cannot be created in time. But organized peaceful resistance can be offered on a large scale even then and this would fit in with Mr. Gandhi's methods and technique. Many people are thinking on these lines. Of course what will ultimately be done depends on many uncertain factors and the actual position at the time the decision has to be made.

Certainly we cannot, under any circumstances, evade responsibility whenever it comes to us, however grave the position. Certainly we must try our utmost to keep India intact and prevent invasion and aggression. Certainly we must not submit to an invader or aggressor whatever the consequences. This is the fundamental Congress position. Its application depends on the actual circumstances.

It is clear that whether we can produce new armies or not, we can certainly speed up production in a hundred ways and organize our people.

[2] See *ante* Chapter IV, p. 260.

Mr. Gandhi thinks that India can play a great part in not only future post-war problems but also, when the time and opportunity come, in helping to end the war. He does not think in terms of India being a weak nation which has to submit to superior military prowess. He hopes that if India sticks to the right path, she will play this great part and lead the world to a new order where armed might does not overawe nations. He is not a negative pacifist but an aggressive one who refuses to surrender and fights by his own methods.

Whether Mr. Gandhi's line is capable of adoption in the present circumstances of the world is a very arguable matter. It must seem rather fantastic to people and nations suffering the barbarities of modern warfare. And yet this has to be borne in mind as it greatly influences India, though India or the Congress are not wholly converted to it. A free India will function as it chooses and this functioning will no doubt depend on external and internal conditions and on world happenings. Mr. Gandhi, it should always be remembered, is an intensely practical man and adapts himself to his changing environment.

We have thus to consider the problem in India from this practical side. What can we do under existing circumstances so as to safeguard our own freedom as well as the cause of freedom throughout the world? But before we can function we must have freedom to function and that can only come when British control is completely withdrawn. A very comforting feature of the situation is the growing comradeship between China and India, for on their friendship and cooperation much will depend. They are both essentially non-aggressive, peaceful nations and they can serve as a powerful counterpoise to the violent aggression of European nations and Japan.

Long arguments sometimes do not clarify a situation so much as an intimate glimpse into an individual's or a group's mind. It is interesting therefore to recall what was said in February 1933 in the British Parliament during a debate on Japan's invasion of Manchuria. Many leading British statesmen spoke then and supported Japan's aggression. Sir John Simon (now Lord Simon and still a prominent member of the British Cabinet), who was Foreign Minister, supported Japan's case. He had done so also at Geneva[3] and been complimented on it by the Japanese representative there. One of the most interesting and significant speeches delivered was that of Mr. L.S. Amery in the House of Commons on February 27, 1933.[4] He said. . . .[5]

[3] At the League of Nations.

[4] Omission at source.

[5] Justifying Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931–32, Amery said that Japan had needed markets and had acted with the object of creating peace and order in Manchuria and defending herself against the continual aggression of vigorous Chinese nationalism. He added, "Our whole policy in India, our whole policy in Egypt, stand condemned, if we condemn Japan."

Mr. L.S. Amery is today a prominent member of the British Cabinet and is Secretary of State for India and as such is responsible for British policy towards India. This will give some idea of what kind of things we have to deal with. Mr. Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister, has all along been a bitter enemy of Indian freedom. Their whole policy has been one of unrelenting opposition to it and of insult to Indian nationalism. For them there is no question of any advance except in the distant hereafter. There is argument about Dominion Status and other such like things, but as a matter of fact nothing of the kind has ever been offered. Far lesser offers made by Indian moderate politicians (who have been friends of the British) have been rejected by the British Government. All advances by the Congress during the past two and a half years have been treated with contempt. This is the picture which India has before her eyes and she reacts in anger to it. She sees that British imperialism wants to hold on to her and to continue to exploit her. With this she cannot cooperate. And yet because of the larger causes and issues involved, we have sought not to embarrass the war effort.

9

Note on Conversations with Gandhi[1]

After conversations with Bapu from June 8th to 12th 1942, Bapu's views appear to be as follows:

1. The time has come for us to emphasize and concentrate on complete independence and the total withdrawal of the British power from India. This has become essential from every point of view and there is no solution of any of India's major problems (such as the communal problem) till such withdrawal. Even from the point of view of the War, the defence of India, help to China, or the advancement of the Allied cause, this is necessary. Not to do so is to allow the situation to deteriorate progressively and rapidly, and go downhill to disaster.

2. The demand for the withdrawal of British rule from India means in effect the acknowledgment of India's independence and then consultations on this basis between representatives of India and England for the transfer of power and for a mutual adjustment of relations between the two countries, especially in view of the war that is going on.

3. The demand does not mean the withdrawal of Britishers as such or even the British army, which in view of the War may be treated as an allied army engaged in the common defence of India. But it does mean full transfer of political power to Indian representatives, and a treaty or arrangement for the joint defence of India. This would apply equally to American forces in India which may be treated as an allied army also.

4. The demand for independence and transfer of political power must be acceded to independently of any arrangements being made in India for the governance of the country after the British withdrawal. It is hoped that satisfactory arrangements for the establishment of a National Government, agreeable to the major groups and parties, will be made. It is expected that, in any event, as soon as the independence of India is accepted and announced, an agreement between the major groups will become highly likely. But even if

[1] This confidential note was written by Jawaharlal Nehru at Wardha between 12–14 June 1942. JN Papers, NMML.

unfortunately this does not take place immediately, the British Government, on their part, must agree to Indian independence. Such risks of chaos and anarchy as may appear possible are preferable to the existing state of affairs.

5. Thus, in any event, and whatever the possible consequences, the British Government should recognize the independence of India and announce their intention to hand over political power.

6. From the points of view of the War, the defence of India and help to China, the present state of affairs is highly unsatisfactory and it is exceedingly doubtful if any effective action in this behalf can be taken by the British Government and its allies so long as India is treated as a subject country. The risks of maintaining the status quo are very great—much greater than those involved in any change. India is sullen and angry and is a deadweight round the Allies; her defence is impeded; and the help that might be sent to China is far less than a free India could and would give. The mere fact of Indian independence would make a vast difference all over the world and give a moral weight to the Allied cause. It would electrify not only the Indian people but people everywhere. But even apart from the moral benefit, the practical gain would be great. India could then defend herself better, give far more aid to China, and help the Allied cause more effectively.

7. The people of India should have, and have, every sympathy for China's freedom. China's subjection to Japanese imperialism would be a great tragedy in itself and would also add to the dangers of India. Therefore, it is desirable and necessary for India to help China to the best of her ability. At present India cannot do so. A free India will do so effectively and can make it impossible for Japanese imperialism to crush China.

8. We cannot on any account entertain the idea of doing anything to facilitate the Japanese invasion of India or Japanese aggression in China. Such invasion must be resisted by Indians. At present owing to British rule and the methods practised by it, there is intense and widespread resentment all over India and, as a consequence, a certain feeling of satisfaction at British defeats and Japanese victories. This is leading to a state of passive acceptance of a Japanese invasion when it comes. It saps the people's will and power to resist such an invasion when it comes. This is dangerous and harmful to India, develops a servile and submissive state of mind, and makes her an easy prey to an invader. To change this mentality and make it vital and resentful of any invasion or of submission, it is essential for Indians to have and secure independence, which they must defend.

9. The transfer of political power will involve an upsetting of the existing structure. This should however be done so as not to give any advantage to the Japanese or any other aggressor. Thus it should be agreed that the existing military dispositions of armed forces should continue and the British or American allies of India should be entitled to use India as a base for their operations

for the defence of India, for help to China and for objectives connected with these.

10. The British and American forces will also be entitled to take advantage of the productive capacity of India.

11. The Indian National Government will treat the British and American forces as allies and will cooperate with them in the defence of India and help to China and connected purposes. Gandhiji in his personal capacity cannot countenance the use of armed forces by India as this is opposed to his principles, and he would like India (and the rest of the world) to adopt the methods of nonviolence. But he recognizes that in existing circumstances an Indian national government is not going to take this view and will use armed forces for India's defence. He is prepared also to countenance, after the declaration of Indian independence, the presence of British and American forces in India as allies cooperating in a common endeavour.

12. In the event (which is not only likely but almost certain) of Britain not agreeing to Indian independence, the status quo cannot be tolerated and something must be done to change it. That is some kind of a direct action movement should be started. But before this is done the public mind must be prepared for it, and in initiating or carrying on that movement every care should be taken that it does not directly or indirectly aid the Japanese or any other invader of India. Apart from this, the movement should be envisaged as a mass movement and there should be as few restrictions as possible on the people who wish to join it. Nor should any untoward incidents lead to its suspension or withdrawal. The movement must aim at independence and be carried on till this is achieved.

13. As the situation changes from day to day, it is difficult to say definitely beforehand what should be done some weeks or months later. The actual decision for any major step must be based on the actual position then—national and international.

14. Quite apart from a major step, some kind of local resistance or opposition may become necessary in the case of sudden and improper evacuation orders or other orders which harass the people. Whenever this is necessary it should be done. It is possible that out of these minor conflicts, a major conflict might take shape.

1. Full independence must be recognized.

2. As soon as this is done representatives of India and England (and when necessary other United Nations) to meet to discuss actual conditions of transfer of power to National Government.

3. National Government associates itself as an ally of the United Nations and cooperates with them in the defence of India, help to China, etc.

4. British or American armed forces in India to be treated as allied forces.

5. India's industrial capacity to be increased in every way.

10

Two Backgrounds[1]

By writing of the past I have tried to rid myself of the burden of the past. But the present remains with all its complexity and irrationality and the dark future that lies beyond, and the burden of these is no less than that of the past. The vagrant mind, finding no haven, still wanders about restlessly, bringing discomfort to its possessor as well as to others. There is some envy for those virgin minds which have not been soiled or violated by thought's assault, and on which doubt has cast no shadow nor written a line. How easy is life for them in spite of its occasional shock and pain.

Events take place one after the other and the uninterrupted and unending stream of happenings goes on. We seek to understand a particular event by isolating it and looking at it by itself, as if it were the beginning and the end, the resultant of some cause immediately preceding it. Yet it has no beginning and is but a link in an unending chain, caused by all that has preceded it, and resulting from the wills, urges, and desires of innumerable human beings coalescing and conflicting with each other, and producing something different from that which any single individual intended to happen. Those wills, urges, and desires are themselves largely conditioned by previous events and experiences, and the new event in its turn becomes another conditioning factor for the future. The man of destiny, the leader who influences the multitude, undoubtedly plays an important part in this process, and yet he himself is the product of past events and forces and his influence is conditioned by them.

What happened in India in August, 1942, was no sudden development but a culmination of all that had gone before. Much has been written about it, in attack, criticism or defence, and many explanations given. And yet most of this writing misses the real meaning, for it applies purely political considerations to something that was deeper than politics. Behind it all lay an intense feeling that it was no longer possible to endure and live under foreign autocratic rule. All other questions became secondary—whether under that rule it was possible to make improvements or progress in some directions, or whether the consequences of a challenge might be more harmful still. Only the overwhelming desire to be

[1] From *The Discovery of India*, pp. 479–83.

rid of it and to pay any price for the riddance remained, only the feeling that whatever happened this could not be endured.

That feeling was no new sensation; it had been there for many years. But previously it had been restrained in many ways and disciplined to keep pace with events. The war itself was both a restraining and releasing factor. It opened out our minds to vast developments and revolutionary changes, to the possibility of the realization of our hopes in the near future; and it put a brake on much that we might otherwise have done because of our desire to help, and certainly not to hinder in any way, the struggle against the Axis powers.

But, as the war developed, it became even clearer that the western democracies were fighting not for a change but for a perpetuation of the old order. Before the war they had appeased fascism, not only because of the fear of its consequences but also because of a certain ideological sympathy with it and an extreme dislike of some of the probable alternatives to it. Nazism and fascism were no sudden growths or accidents of history. They were the natural developments of the past course of events, of empire and racial discrimination, of national struggle, of the growing concentration of power, of technological growth which found no scope for its fulfilment within the existing framework of society, of the inherent conflict between the democratic ideal and a social structure opposed to it. Political democracy in western Europe and North America, opening the door to national and individual progress, had also released new forces and ideas, aiming inevitably at economic equality. Conflict was inherent in the situation; there would either be an enlargement of that political democracy or attempts to curb it and end it. Democracy grew in content and area, in spite of constant opposition, and became the accepted ideal of political organization. But a time came when a further expansion endangered the basis of the social structure, and then the upholders of that structure became adamant and aggressive and organized themselves to oppose change. In countries so circumstanced that the crisis developed more rapidly, democracy was openly and deliberately crushed and fascism and Nazism appeared. In the democracies of western Europe and North America the same processes were at play though many other factors delayed the crisis and probably the much longer tradition of peaceful and democratic government also helped. Before some of these democracies lay empires where there was no democracy at all and where the same kind of authoritarianism which is associated with fascism prevailed. There also, as in fascist countries, the governing class allied itself to reactionary and opportunist groups and feudal survivals in order to suppress the demand for freedom. And there also they began to assert that democracy, though good as an ideal and desirable in their own home-lands, was not suited to the peculiar conditions prevailing in their colonial domains. So it was a natural consequence for these western democracies to feel some kind of an ideological bond with fascism, even when they disliked many of its more brutal and vulgar manifestations.

When they were forced to fight in self-defence, they looked forward to a restoration of that very structure which had failed so dismally. The war was looked upon and presented as a defensive war, and this was true enough in a way. But there was another aspect of the war, a moral aspect which went beyond military objectives and attacked aggressively the fascist creed and outlook. For it was a war, as has been said, for the soul of the peoples of the world. In it lay the seeds of change not only for the fascist countries but also for the United Nations. This moral aspect of the war was obscured by powerful propaganda, and emphasis was laid on defence and perpetuation of the past and not on creating a new future. There were many people in the West who ardently believed in this moral aspect and wanted to create a new world which would afford some guarantees against that utter failure of human society which the World War represented. There were vast numbers of people everywhere, including especially the men who fought and died on the field of battle, who vaguely but firmly hoped for this change. And there were those hundreds of millions of the dispossessed and exploited and racially discriminated against in Europe and America, and much more so in Asia and Africa, who could not isolate the war from their memories of the past and their present misery, and passionately hoped, even when hope was unreasonable, that the war would somehow lift the burdens that crushed them.

But the eyes of the leaders of the United Nations were turned elsewhere; they looked back to the past and not forward to the future. Sometimes they spoke eloquently of the future to appease the hunger of their people, but their policy had little to do with these fine phrases. For Mr. Winston Churchill it was a war of restoration and nothing more, a continuation, with minor changes, of both the social structure of England and the imperial structure of her empire. President Roosevelt spoke in terms of greater promise, but his policy had not been radically different. Still many people all over the world looked to him with hope as a man of vision and high statesmanship.

So the future for India and the rest of the world, in so far as the British ruling class could help it, would be in line with the past, and the present had necessarily to conform to it. In that very present the seeds of this future were being sown. The Cripps proposals, for all their seeming advance, created new and dangerous problems for us, which threatened to become insuperable barriers to freedom. To some extent they have already had this result. The all-pervading autocracy and authoritarianism of the British Government in India, and the widespred suppression of the most ordinary civil rights and liberties, had reached their further limits during, and under cover of, the war. No one in the present generation had experienced the like of these. They were constant reminders of our enslaved condition and continuing humiliation. They were also a presage of the future, of the shape of things to come, for out of this present, the future would grow. Anything seemed to be better than to submit to this degradation.

How many people out of India's millions felt this way is impossible to say. For most of those millions all conscious feeling has been deadened by poverty and misery. Among others were those who had been corrupted by office or privilege or vested interest, or whose minds had been diverted by special claims. Yet the feeling was very widespread, varying in intensity and sometimes overlaid by other feelings. There were many gradations in it, from an intensity of belief and a desire to brave all hazards, which led inevitably to action, to a vague sympathy from a safe distance. Some, tragically inclined, felt suffocated and strangled at the lack of air to breathe in the oppressive atmosphere that surrounded them; others, living on the ordinary trivial plane, had more capacity to adapt themselves to conditions they disliked.

11

Foreign Rule[1]

Foreign rule over a civilized community suffers from many disadvantages and many ills follow in its train. One of these disadvantages is that it has to rely on the less desirable elements in the population. The idealists, the proud, the sensitive, the self-respecting, those who care sufficiently for freedom and are not prepared to degrade themselves by an enforced submission to an alien authority, keep aloof or come into conflict with it. The proportion of careerists and opportunists in its ranks is much higher than it would normally be in a free country. Even in an independent country with an autocratic form of government many sensitive people are unable to cooperate in governmental activities, and there are very few opportunities for the release of new talent.

An alien government, which must necessarily be authoritarian suffers from all these disadvantages and adds to them, for it has always to function in an atmosphere of hostility and suppression. Fear becomes the dominant motive of both the government and the people, and the most important services are the police and the secret service.

When there is an actual conflict between the government and the people, this tendency to rely on and encourage the undesirable elements in the population becomes even more strongly marked. Many conscientious people, of course, through force of circumstances have to continue functioning in the governmental structure, whether they like it or not. But those who come to the top and play the most important roles are chosen for their anti-nationalism, their subservience, their capacity to crush and humiliate their own countrymen. The highest merit is opposition, often the result of personal rivalries and disappointments, to the sentiments and feelings of the great majority of the people.

In this turgid and unwholesome atmosphere no idealism or noble sentiment has any place, and the prizes held out are high positions and big salaries. The incompetence or worse failings of the supporters of government have to be tolerated, for the measure of everything is the active support given to that government in crushing its opponents. This leads to government cohabiting

[1] From *The Discovery of India*, pp. 493–5.

with strange groups and very odd persons. Corruption, cruelty, callousness, and a complete disregard of the public welfare flourish and poison the air.*

While much that the Government does is bitterly resented, far greater resentment is caused by those Indian supporters of it who become more royalist than the king. The average Indian has a feeling of disgust and nausea at this behaviour, and to him such people are comparable to the men of Vichy or the puppet regimes set up by the German and Japanese governments. This feeling is not confined to Congressmen but extends to members of the Muslim League and other organizations, and is expressed even by the most moderate of our politicians.**

The war afforded a sufficient excuse and was a cover for intense anti-national activities of the Government and novel forms of propaganda. Mushroom labour groups were financed to build up "labour morale," and newspapers containing scurrilous attacks on Gandhi and the Congress were started and subsidized, in spite of the paper shortage which came in the way of other newspapers functioning. Official advertisement supposed to be connected with the war effort, were also utilized for this purpose. Information centres were opened in foreign countries to carry on continuous propaganda on behalf of the Government of India. Crowds of undistinguished and often unknown individuals were sent on officially organized deputations, especially to the USA, despite the protest of the Central Assembly, to act as propaganda agents and stools of the British Government. Persons holding independent views or critical of Government policy had no chance of going abroad; they could neither get a passport nor transport facilities.

All these and many other devices have been employed by the Government during the last two years to create a semblance of what it considers "public

** The Bengal Administrative Inquiry Commerce, presided over by Sir Archibald Rowlands in their report, issued in May, 1945, say: "So widespread has corruption become, and so defeatist is the attitude taken towards it, that we think that the most drastic steps should be taken to stamp out the evil which has corrupted the public service and public morals." The Committee received, with surprise and regret, evidence that the attitude of some civil servants towards the public left much to be desired. It was stated that "they adopt an attitude of aloof superiority, appear to pay greater regard to the mechanical operation of a soulless machine than to promoting the welfare of the people and look upon themselves rather as masters than as servants of the people."*

*** Hitler, an expert in compelling others to submit to his yoke, says in "Mein Kampf": 'We must not expect embodiments of characterless submission suddenly to repent in order, on the basis of intelligence and all human experience, to act otherwise than hitherto. On the contrary, these very people will hold every such lesson at a distance, until the nation is either once and for all accustomed to its slave's yoke, or until better forces push to the surface to wrest power from the infamous corrupters. In the first case these people continue to feel not at all badly since they not infrequently are entrusted by the victors with the office of slave overseer, which these characterless types then exercise over their own nation and that generally more heartlessly than any alien beast imposed by the enemy himself."*

tranquillity." Political and public life becomes dormant, as, indeed, it must in a country more or less under military occupation and rule. But this forcible suppression of symptoms can only cause an aggravation of the disease, and India is very sick. Prominent Indian conservatives, who have always tried to cooperate with the Government, have been filled with anxiety at this volcano which has been temporarily sealed at its mouth, and they have stated that they have never known such bitterness against the British Government.

I do not know and cannot tell till I come into contact with my people how they have changed during these two years and what feelings stir in their hearts, but I have little doubt that these recent experiences have changed them in many ways. I have looked into my own mind from time to time and examined its almost involuntary reaction to events. I had always looked forward in the past to a visit to England, because I have many friends there and old memories draw me. But now I found that there was no such desire and the idea was distasteful. I wanted to keep as far away from England as possible, and I had no wish even to discuss India's problems with Englishmen. And then I remembered some friends and softened a little, and I told myself how wrong it was to judge a whole people in this way. I thought also of the terrible experiences that the English people had gone through in this war, of the continuous strain in which they had lived, of the loss of so many of their loved ones. All this helped to tone down my feelings, but that basic reaction remained. Probably time and the future will lessen it and give another perspective. But if I, with all my associations with England and the English, could feel that way, what of others who had lacked those contacts?

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1

The Buddha[1]

The Buddha story attracted me even in early boyhood, and I was drawn to the young Siddhartha who, after many inner struggles and pain and torment, was to develop into the Buddha. Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia* became one of my favourite books. In later years, when I travelled about a great deal in my province, I liked to visit the many places connected with the Buddha legend, sometimes making a detour for the purpose. Most of these places lie in my province or not far from it. Here (on the Nepal frontier) Buddha was born, here he wandered, here (at Gaya in Bihar) he sat under the Bodhi tree and gained enlightenment, here he preached his first sermon, here he died.

When I visited countries where Buddhism is still a living and dominant faith, I went to see the temples and the monasteries and met monks and laymen, and tried to make out what Buddhism had done to the people. How had it influenced them, what impress had it left on their minds and faces, how did they react to modern life? There was much I did not like. The rational ethical doctrine had become overlaid with so much verbiage, so much ceremonial, canon law, so much, in spite of the Buddha, metaphysical doctrine and even magic. Despite Buddha's warning, they had deified him, and his huge images, in the temples and elsewhere, looked down upon me and I wondered what he would have thought. Many of the monks were ignorant persons, rather conceited and demanding obeisance, if not to themselves then to their vestments. In each country the national characteristics had imposed themselves on the religion and shaped it according to their distinctive customs and modes of life. All this was natural enough and perhaps an inevitable development.

But I saw much also that I liked. There was an atmosphere of peaceful study and contemplation in some of the monasteries and the schools attached to them. There was a look of peace and calm on the faces of many of the monks, a dignity, a gentleness, an air of detachment and freedom from the cares of the world. Did all this accord with life today, or was it a mere escape from it? Could it not be fitted into life's ceaseless struggle and tone down the vulgarity and acquisitiveness and violence that afflict us?

[1] From *The Discovery of India*, pp. 130–2.

The pessimism of Buddhism did not fit in with my approach to life, nor did the tendency to walk away from life and its problems. I was, somewhere at the back of my mind, a pagan with a pagan's liking for the exuberance of life and nature, and not very much averse to the conflicts that life provides. All that I had experienced, all that I saw around me, painful and distressing as it was, had not dulled that instinct.

Was Buddhism passive and pessimistic? Its interpreters may say so; many of its own devotees may have drawn that meaning. I am not competent to judge of its subtleties and its subsequent complex and metaphysical development. But when I think of the Buddha no such feeling arises in me, nor can I imagine that a religion based mainly on passivity and pessimism could have had such a powerful hold on vast numbers of human beings, among them the most gifted of their kind.

The conception of the Buddha, to which innumerable loving hands have given shape in carven stone and marble and bronze, seems to symbolize the whole spirit of Indian thought, or at least one vital aspect of it. Seated on the lotus flower, calm and impassive, above passion and desire, beyond the storm and strife of this world, so far away he seems, out of reach, unattainable. Yet again we look and behind those still, unmoving features there is a passion and an emotion, strange and more powerful than the passions and emotions we have known. His eyes are closed, but some power of the spirit looks out of them and a vital energy fills the frame. The ages roll by and Buddha seems not so far away after all; his voice whispers in our ears and tells us not to run away from the struggle but, calm-eyed, to face it, and to see in life ever greater opportunities for growth and advancement.

Personality counts today as ever, and a person who has impressed himself on the thought of mankind as Buddha has, so that even today there is something living and vibrant about the thought of him, must have been a wonderful man—a man who was, as Barth says, the 'finished model of calm and sweet majesty, of infinite tenderness for all that breathes and compassion for all that suffers, of perfect moral freedom and exemption from every prejudice.' And the nation and the race which can produce such a magnificent type must have deep reserves of wisdom and inner strength.

2

Lenin[1]

Economic factors, we are told, govern the world and politics is rapidly becoming a handmaid of economies. But Russia also repeats the lesson of history that men also shape destiny and sometimes the will of one man alters the lives of millions. It is instructive therefore to study the careers of some of the makers of the revolution, who out of anarchy and chaos created a new and strong Russia. Exiles, with no knowledge of military affairs, creating great and victorious armies; with no experience of diplomacy, treating successfully with the well-seasoned diplomats of other countries; with no knowledge of business or administration, running an enormous state machine which controlled all production and distribution. Specially it is worthwhile to know something of the greatest of these—Lenin.

Many people have paid their tribute of admiration to him, but I have unfortunately not come across a satisfactory account of his life.* A book which will interest Indian readers is Rene Fullop-Miller's[2] *Lenin and Gandhi*[3] (Putnam). It is somewhat superficial and does not satisfy, but it contains some good pen pictures of Lenin. A short and interesting sketch of Lenin is also to be found in Emil Ludwig's[4] *Genius and Character*[5] (Jonathan Cape).

Four years ago Lenin died.[6] He was just over fifty, of which thirty years had been spent in preparation and ceaseless toil varied with persecution and flight in Siberia.[7] Victory came to him in the end but with it came years of tremendous difficulty and danger. He died as the result of a bullet wound but before he died

[1] First published as an article in *The Hindu*, 5 April 1928. Excerpts.

* A recent book, highly spoken of, is *Lenin*, by Valerin Marcus. Translated from the German into English (Victor Gollanez).

[2] Author; visited Russia several times after World War I.

[3] Published in 1927.

[4] (1881–1948); German biographer; his works include lives of Goethe, Napoleon and Bismarck.

[5] Published in 1927.

[6] Lenin died on 21 January 1924.

[7] Lenin was arrested in December 1895, kept in prison for over a year and sentenced to three years exile in Siberia. He was released in February 1900.

he had conquered over these difficulties and dangers and he passed away in the knowledge of his trumph. Today he lies embalmed in a simple mausoleum in the beautiful Red Square of Moscow under the shadow of the Kremlin. He lies asleep as it were and it is difficult to believe that he is dead. In life they say he was not beautiful to look at. He had too much of common clay in him and about him was the 'smell of the Russian soil'. But in death there is a strange beauty and his brow is peaceful and unclouded. On his lips there hovers a smile and there is a suggestion of pugnacity, of work done and success achieved. He has a uniform on and one of his hands is lightly clenched. Even in death he is the dictator.

To this resting place of Lenin's body come people from distant parts to do reverence to his memory. Every evening the doors are thrown open for some hours and a continuous stream of the peasants and workers, for whom he lived and died and who loved him, passes by. The Orthodox Church is at a discount in Russia but the cult of Lenin is everywhere in evidence. Every shop, every room almost, has his picture or bust. 'In a religious age', says Maxim Gorky,[8] 'people would have made him a saint'. In India he would certainly have been canonized, but saints are not held in repute in Soviet circles, and the people of Russia have done him the higher honour of loving him as one of themselves. To each of them he was a brother, a comrade, who knew and laboured for them and to whom they could always turn when in distress.

'I know a pair of eyes which have been for ever numbed by the burning sorrow of the Terror', said Gorky of Lenin. This sorrow did not leave him to the end. It made him a fierce fanatic and gave him the strength of will to persevere and achieve. But sorrow for the misery of his fellow men did not make him gloomy or reserved. He was 'filled to the brim with the sap of life', and even 'in the unhappiest moments of his existence, he was serene and always prone to gay laughter.'

Lenin's early years were typical of the man. When he was seventeen his elder brother was hanged[9] for an attempt on the life of the Tsar. He was profoundly moved but even then he saw clearly that nothing could be gained by terroristic methods.

'We cannot succeed in that way; it is not the right way', he said. But that did not mean his giving up the struggle. He set about preparing in his own way. It was a long way and a wearisome way but quietly and persistently he worked at it for thirty years of his life. He did not suddenly develop into a champion of the workers. He paid little attention to speaking in public or writing, but set himself down to investigate and understand thoroughly the masses. In after years he had little patience with orators and fine speakers; he was always afraid

[8] Maxim Gorky (1868–1936); Russian novelist and dramatist.

[9] Lenin's elder brother, Alexander, was a terrorist who in 1887 was implicated in a plot to assassinate Tsar Alexander III and was executed.

of too many words preventing action. For him action was the only thing that counted. 'Revolutions', according to him, 'must not remain on paper, they must be carried out in action; and the proper execution of even the most unimportant measure was more important for the existence of Soviet Russia than ten Soviet resolutions.' Thus, as Maxim Gorky has said: 'His heroism lacked almost all external glitter. It was the modest ascetic zeal, not seldom seen in Russia, of a revolutionary who believed in the possibility of justice on earth, the heroism of a man who, for the sake of his heavy task, renounced all worldly joys.'

A classic instance is often given of his utter calmness in emergency and his attention to trivial detail even when the life of the state was threatened. During the critical days of 1921 when Moscow itself was threatened by the enemy and most people thought that the Soviet power was going to collapse, Lenin thought of the introduction of electric light in the villages[10] and issued an ordinance for the immediate supply of electric light to certain areas.

Lenin has been called the coldest of fanatics. He would never let himself be carried away by enthusiasm and would not give in to the best of his friends even at the risk of a break. He had no use for sympathizers who did not actively join the fray. Only full-blooded adherents were to his liking, experts in revolution who devoted themselves wholly to the cause. Revolution was to be prepared for cautiously and quietly by educating 'revolutionary experts, men who were revolutionaries by profession and not mere enthusiasts, idealists or dilettanti.' He realized, what we in India are dimly beginning to appreciate, that it is a difficult, if not an impossible task, for amateurs, with little time to spare from their daily routine and no special training, to fight whole-timers who are experts at their business of defending the existing regime. 'Let our comrades', he wrote, 'permit the use of the rigorous term "technical expert" for when I speak of inadequate preparations the accusation applies also to myself. I have worked with men who set themselves to very high and difficult responsibilities, yet we suffered painfully from the feeling that we were but amateurs. The more ashamed I am to confess this, the more bitter I feel towards those sham socialists who fail to realize that we dare not lower the revolutionary to the level of the amateur.' With how much greater truth does this apply to all of us in India who dabble in politics! . . .

It is difficult for most of us to think of our ideals and our theories in terms of reality. We have talked and written of Swaraj for years, but when Swaraj comes it will probably take us by surprise. We have passed the independence

[10] Rural electrification was one of Lenin's pet projects. He wrote to the Chairman of the State Planning Commission (which had been set up in February 1921) that 'a plan must be worked out for the installation of electric light in every house in the R.S.F.S.R.' A special body called the State Commission for Electrification was created to draw up the plan. This plan was later used by the State Planning Commission.

resolution at the Congress, and yet how many of us realize its full implications? How many belie it by their words and actions? For them it is something to be considered as a distant goal, not as a thing of today or tomorrow. They talk of Swaraj and independence in their conferences and their councils but their minds are full of reservations and their acts are feeble and halting.

In Russia also the revolutionaries of an older generation lived in a world of theory, and hardly believed in the realization of their ideals. But Lenin came with his directness and realism and shook the fabric of old time orthodox socialism and revolution. He taught people to think that the ideal they had dreamed of and worked for was not mere theory but something to be realized then and there. By amazing power of will he hypnotized a nation and filled a disunited and demoralized people with energy and determination and the strength to endure and suffer for a cause.

Many had their full share in this remarkable triumph, among them specially Trotsky, who now lives in Siberia. But Lenin stood supreme. Saint or sinner, the miracle was chiefly of his doing. And we may well say with Romain Rolland, that Lenin was 'the greatest man of action in our century, and at the same time the most selfless.'

3

Mohammad Iqbal[1]

Dear Bebee,

I have never met Iqbal. He has always been one of the many problems I could not solve. How can a real poet be so extraordinarily communal and narrow-minded and earthly? And yet he happens to be both. Very probably this contradiction is largely due to his clothes which you loathe. I am entirely with you about the proposed legislation to regulate the sartorial and other appearance of a poet. It will be difficult to get it through for I have come to the conclusion that people object to changing their clothes and tufts and beards and other such-like excrescences and markings far more than they object to a change in political or economic conditions. They say that politics have passed away and have given place to economics. We have the economic interpretation of history, and the importance of psychology and psychoanalysis in education and the formation of a people's character. Why not a sartorial interpretation of history? There is no doubt that clothes have a powerful influence on the mind. How great must have been their influence in history? So I am sure this would do Iqbal a lot of good. We might even wean him from the harmful influence of dogmatic religion which must do infinite harm to his poetry.

Jawahar

[1] To Padmaja Naidu, Padmaja Naidu Papers, NMML. Excerpts.

4

The Aga Khan[1]

Sir Mohammad Iqbal's earnest plea for the solidarity of Islam and his protest against fissiparous tendencies led me to wonder as to where the line should be drawn. His Highness the Aga Khan is today considered the outstanding leader of the Indian Muslims. The government treats him and honours him as such, orthodox Muslim leaders, whenever in trouble or faced with difficulty, seek refuge under his sheltering wings. Even Sir Mohammad might, so to speak, be said to march under his political banner. From the point of view of orthodox Islam and its unity of conception, politics, sociology and economics can hardly be separated from religion. One would think therefore that the Aga Khan was the ideal representative of this unity and solidarity of religious belief.

Whether this is so I do not know and I should welcome wiser people to inform me. I have long had a vague kind of idea, however, that he hardly belongs to the inner orthodox fold, and I have admired him for the truly wonderful way in which he manages to combine, and gracefully carry in his own person, the most contradictory qualities, and to take part in multifarious activities which appear to be mutually antagonistic and irreconcilable. He is the head and spiritual leader of a widespread and wealthy sect and, I am told, that almost divine attributes are assigned to him by his devoted followers. He is said to derive a vast ecclesiastical revenue from the faithful, and one of his sources of income is supposed to be the granting of spiritual favours and indulgences. It is interesting to find these old-world practices being continued today in an intensive form. But the really remarkable fact is that the spiritual head who supports and encourages these practices is a modern of moderns, highly cultured in western ways, a prince of the turf, most at home in London and Paris. Only a remarkable personality could successfully carry this double burden. The Aga Khan not only does so with supreme ease, but he adds to it many public and political activities as well as the leadership of the Indian Muslims. That is an astonishing feat which, even though one may disagree with the Aga Khan, fills one with admiration for him.

But the question that is troubling me, as a result of reading Sir Mohammad

[1] Almora District Jail, 21 August 1935. Published in the *Modern Review*, November 1935, pp. 505–7. SWJN, Vol. VI, pp. 470–4. Excerpts.

Iqbal's statement on the solidarity of Islam, is how all this fits in with that solidarity. It may be perfectly justifiable to spend the money of the faithful on racing; that, after all, is a minor matter. But is the Aga Khan's sect a partner in that Islamic solidarity or not? I remember reading long ago Mark Twain's account of a visit paid by the Aga Khan to him in Bombay. Mark Twain's Indian servant burst into his hotel room one day in a state of extreme excitement and announced that God had come to pay a call on him. Many pray to God daily—and Mark Twain was a religious type of man—and each one of us, according to his early teaching or mental and spiritual development, has his own conception of God. But the best of us are apt to be taken aback by a sudden visitation of the Almighty. Mark Twain, after he had recovered from his initial surprise, discovered that God had come to him in the handsome and corporeal shape of the Aga Khan.

This characterization of the Aga Khan as God was no doubt a foolish error of Mark Twain's servant—and the Aga Khan cannot be held responsible for it. So far as I know, he does not claim divinity. But there seem to be a large number of foolish persons about who ascribe certain divine or semi-divine attributes to him. Some of the propagandists of the sect describe him as an avatar or incarnation of the divinity. They have every right to do so if they believe in it. I have absolutely no complaint. But how does all this fit in with the solidarity of Islam?

A story that has long fascinated me is the account of the Aga Khan giving chits or notes of introduction for the archangel Gabriel to his followers, or some of them. This, so the tale runs, is to ensure their comfort and happiness in the next world. I cannot vouch for the truth of this story, but I do hope that it is based on fact. There is little of romance left in this drab and dreary world, and to correspond with an archangel is a captivating idea. It seems to bring heaven nearer, and even our life here down below assumes a rosier hue.

Then there is another story, not so attractive, but nevertheless extraordinary enough. I had heard of it previously and lately I read an account in a book by an American traveller. Colonel E. Alexander Powell, in his *The Last Home of Mystery*, referring to the Aga Khan says:

> His sanctity is so great, indeed, in the eyes of his followers, that the water in which he bathes is carefully conserved and sold annually to the representatives of the various Mohammedan sects at a ceremony held once each year at Aga Khan Hall in Bombay. The price paid for this holy water is the Aga Khan's weight in gold, the scales used for the weighing ceremony being adjusted to the fraction of an ounce troy. As the Aga Khan is a plump little man, the price paid for his used bath water is a high one.

Colonel Powell has probably added some journalist and fancy touches of his own to this account. But the story is an old and oft-repeated one and, to my

knowledge, has never been contradicted. If the Aga Khan can find a profitable use for his bath water and at the same time serve and exalt faith, surely it is no one's business to object. Tastes differ and it takes all sorts to make this world of ours. But again I am led to wonder if all this furthers the solidarity and 'democracy of Islam'.

Another incident comes to mind. It was after the War when Kemal Pasha had driven out the Greeks and established himself firmly in power in Turkey. His casual treatment of the new Caliph, appointed by him, drew forth a protest[2]—a very polite protest—from the Aga Khan and Mr. Amir Ali.[3] Kemal Pasha scented an English conspiracy and suddenly started a fierce attack on England, the Aga Khan, the Caliph and some Constantinople journalists. He was not very polite to the Aga Khan and drew all manner of unjust inferences from his long and intimate association with the British Government and the ruling classes. He pointed out that the Aga Khan had not been keen on following the previous Caliph's religious mandate when war had broken out between Turkey and England. He even stressed that the Aga Khan was no true Muslim, or at any rate, not an orthodox one, for did he not belong to a heretical sect? All this and much more he said, keen on gaining his end, which was to discredit the Aga Khan and make him out to be an accomplice of British foreign policy. And making the Aga Khan's move a pretext, the Ataturk put an end to the ancient Khilafat.

Kemal Pasha can hardly be said to be an authority on Islam, for he has deliberately broken away from many of its tenets. His motives were purely political, but his criticisms were not wholly without apparent force.

As I write this, another aspect of the Aga Khan's many-sided personality comes up before me. It is given in an intimate, every day account and is thus all the more valuable and revealing. It appears in the *London Bystander* and I have come across it in a quotation in the *New Statesman*. This tells us that,

> Although the Aga Khan loves the good things of life—he is a great gourmet and has his own cook—there is a very considerable spiritual side to his life. It is hard to pin him down exactly on this point. But he will admit to a strong feeling of the battle between good and evil. At any rate, he is a wonderfully good sportsman, and when Jack Joel offered him a blank cheque the other day for Bahram he refused because he said he wanted in his decrepit old age to be wheeled alongside his Derby winner and say, 'Well, that was a jolly day!'

Much to my regret I have never met the Aga Khan. Only once have I seen him. This was in the early noncooperation days at a Khilafat meeting in

[2] Along with Sayeed Amir Ali, the Aga Khan wrote a letter to Ismet Pasha, Prime Minister of Turkey, protesting against the threatened attacks on the powers of the Caliph. The letter was condemned as British propaganda.

[3] (1849–1928); member, Bengal Legislative Council, 1878; judge, Calcutta High Court, 1890; appointed to the judicial committee of the Privy Council, 1909.

Bombay, where I sat not far from him on the platform. But this glimpse of an attractive and remarkable personality was hardly satisfying, and I have often wanted to find out what curious quality he possesses which enables him to fill with distinction so many and such varied roles, combining the thirteenth century with the twentieth, Mecca and Newmarket, this world and the next, spirituality and racing, politics and pleasure. Wide indeed must be the range of Islam to include all this in its unity and solidarity.

5

Motilal Nehru[1]

Gandhiji had little sense of beauty or artistry in man-made objects, though he admired natural beauty. The Taj Mahal was for him an embodiment of forced labour and little more. His sense of smell was feeble. And yet in his own way he had discovered the art of living and had made of his life an artistic whole. Every gesture had meaning and grace, without a false touch. There were no rough edges or sharp corners about him, no trace of vulgarity or commonness, in which, unhappily, our middle classes excel. Having found an inner peace, he radiated it to others and marched through life's tortuous ways with firm and undaunted steps.

How different was my father from him! But in him too there was strength of personality and a measure of kingliness. In any gathering in which he was present he would inevitably be the centre and the hub. Whatever the place where he sat at table it would become, as an eminent English judge said later, the head of the table. He was neither meek nor mild, and, again unlike Gandhiji, he seldom spared those who differed from him. Consciously imperious, he evoked great loyalty as well as bitter opposition. It was difficult to feel neutral about him; one had to like him or dislike him. With a broad forehead, tight lips and a determined chin, he had a marked resemblance to the busts of the Roman emperors in the museums in Italy. Many friends in Italy who saw his photograph with us remarked on this resemblance. In later years especially, when his head was covered with silver hair—unlike me, he kept his hair to the end—there was a magnificence about him and a grand manner, which is sadly to seek in this world of today. I suppose I am partial to him, but I miss his noble presence in a world full of pettiness and weakness. I look round in vain for that grand manner and splendid strength that was his. . . .

He was attracted by Gandhiji as a man, and that no doubt was a factor which influenced him. Nothing could have made him a close associate of a person he disliked, for he was always strong in his likes and dislikes. But it was a strange combination—the saint, the stoic, the man of religion, one who went through life rejecting what it offers in the way of sensation and physical pleasure, and one who had been a bit of an epicure, who accepted life and welcomed

[1] From *An Autobiography* (1936), pp. 65, 130.

and enjoyed its many sensations, and cared little for what may come in the hereafter. In the language of psychoanalysis it was a meeting of an introvert with an extrovert. Yet there were common bonds, common interests, which drew the two together and kept up, even when, in later years, their politics diverged, a close friendship between them.

6

Ernst Toller[1]

Ernst Toller is dead, killed by his own hand.[2] His hand may have done the deed, but he was done to death by that malignant spirit of brutal violence which reigns in Europe today under the names of fascism and Nazism. How many murders, and that crushing of the soul that is worse than murder, stand to its credit during the long nightmare of the past six years. For the idealist and the sensitive in spirit the world grows more and more difficult to endure, the wide spaces narrow down and enclose and stifle, and escape comes often only through death. Those of them that are fortunate die fighting for their ideals against the evil that oppresses them. But the real tragedy comes to those for whom life has lost all purpose, all meaning, all hope.

Toller was a rare spirit, gentle and sensitive, with the genius of a poet and with a poet's prophetic insight at times, who found the growing violence and the crushing of freedom an intolerable burden. Those who knew him loved him as a dear and precious comrade, but scores of thousands came to know him intimately through his writings, his brilliant plays, his moving letters from prison, his sad autobiography—*I Was A German*. Right through these books of his the reader saw the inner struggles that shook him, the reactions of a sorrow-laden world on a sensitive poet's mind meant for song and joy. Hater of violence in all its forms, his mind struggled with the problem that faces all of us, how to meet the violence of the oppressor and the tyrant without indulging in the hated violence ourselves. Gradually, and with painful processes of thought, he came to the conclusion that violence against the aggressor was not only justified but necessary to prevent the collapse of what he valued. Writer of winged words and phrases in the German language that he loved, he came to believe that the eloquence of the pen has sometimes to give place to the eloquence of the sword in defence of freedom, lest freedom itself die and all eloquence perish. He himself did not take to the sword, but his sympathies went out to those who were fighting for freedom and all his energy was spent in helping their cause.

[1] Allahabad, 24 May 1939. Article printed in *National Herald*, 26 May 1939. JN Papers, NMML.

[2] Toller committed suicide on 22 May 1939.

I met him first twelve years ago in Brussels. A little while before he had come out of prison where the German Social Democratic government had kept him for five years. His fine, young and sensitive face bore the well-known impress of prison and lines of sorrow crossed it. Yet there was much to live for, much to do, and he was full of vitality and love of work for the cause he held dear.

Seven years later I met him again, an exile from his native land, living on sufferance in other countries. He was a Jew and there was no room for Jews in Hitler's Germany. Yet this Jew was such that later he wrote to me that he entirely agreed with what I had written in favour of the Arabs in Palestine. He had married a charming German girl.

Again I saw him many times during last summer in England and France. Munich and the betrayal of Czechoslovakia hit him hard and the shadows deepened on his face. Yet there was something to live for, there was Spain fighting magnificently against the barbarian hordes of fascism. Not the old Spain, but as Spain's great poet Antonio Machado,[3] who died of a broken heart the day after the fall of Barcelona, wrote:

> But another Spain is born,
> A Spain of the chisel and the roller,
> With that eternal youth which springs
> Of the tough past of the race.
>
> A Spain implacable and redeemer,
> A Spain that dawns
> With axe in hand;
> The Spain of fury and of the idea.

So for Spain he laboured feverishly, forgetting his piled-up sorrows in the work in hand. Food was urgently needed, food for innumerable refugees and women and children, food for the hard days of winter. He travelled to America and to various countries in Europe, he pleaded passionately with presidents and prime ministers for government help for the refugees, he addressed popular audiences, he pursued members of parliament and editors of newspapers, full of this one idea. For Spain was not Spain only but the new world locked in a death struggle with the barbarian hordes of reaction and brutal violence.

Alas for that new Spain that did not survive the winter, murdered by those who spoke fair words to her and prated about democracy and freedom! Franco's victory parade passes by in that great city which, so proudly and for so long, held him at bay, and tearful eyes turn away remembering with a breaking of the heart the million men and women who sought to prevent this and now lie under the

[3] (1875–1939); author of *Compos de Castilla* (1912) and other books.

soil of Spain. But the ambassador of Britain's government goes to pay tribute to Franco and to greet this parade of victory.

Alas for Ernst Toller, dear friend and comrade, who died heart-broken at the perishing of his last hope! The world of fascism was too brutal for his sensitive spirit, too coarse for his fine nature. But it was democratic England and democratic France with their false promises and betrayals and stabbings in the back that broke him.

7

Maulana Azad[1]

Maulana is a curious mixture. Born in Mecca, he spent his early years in Egypt at the Al Azhar University. Then he came back to India and before he was twenty he began to attract attention by his writings in Urdu as well as in Arabic. He started Urdu and Arabic weeklies,[2] the latter having a good circulation in the Arabic-speaking countries where consequently he became well-known. While yet a boy he was considered one of the most learned of the Ulemas or the Muslim divines. His general approach to questions however was not that of dogma but, within the limits of a few basic beliefs, of rationalism. In fact he is very much the type of 19th century or late 18th century rationalists. He reminds me in some ways of the French encyclopaedists of the 19th century. For a Muslim divine to give this impression is very unusual.

Unfortunately he never studied any European language. He has just picked up enough English to read books and newspapers. But he cannot speak it. He knows Arabic and Persian well. Probably he is the ablest among the Muslim divines even from their point of view. Most of them are rather afraid of him because he can floor them in any argument, his knowledge even of the scriptures and traditions being very great. He tries, after the fashion of reformers, to give a very broad and liberal interpretation to religious tenets. In his youth he played an important part in influencing Muslim educated opinion. That influence was definitely an anti-imperialist influence. Consequently when the last war began he was interned and for four years he was kept in this fashion. On coming out of his internment, he joined the Congress and took a prominent part in its work. Unfortunately he is not the type of man who likes the rough and tumble of politics. He is very sensitive and rather avoids crowds and publicity. He lacks a certain vital energy and thus we have not really taken full advantage of his gifts. While he is a magnificent speaker in Urdu, it is hardly possible to induce him to address a meeting. Partly, of course, this is due to ill health.

[1] To V.K. Krishna Menon, 14 March 1940, JN Correspondence, NMML. Excerpts.
[2] The *Al-Hilal* and the *Al-Balagh*.

In the modern world he is rather out of place as he thinks on political lines and hardly at all on social or economic lines, though he is intelligent enough to appreciate a certain development. But he cannot change his background. In the Muslim world of India, however, he is tremendously in advance.

8

Adolf Hitler[1]

Yesterday I finished reading Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, a full and unexpurgated edition. Previously, when Hitler seized power in 1933, I had read long extracts from the book and had formed a very unfavourable opinion of it and its author. What had struck me particularly was an element of vulgarity about him. I must say that I have been impressed by the book now. Not by its main argument and thesis, but by the power behind it. I think I can understand Hitler better now and can appreciate how he has been instrumental in bringing about the mighty changes in Germany. It is astounding what he has done in seven years since he took control.

The first thing that struck me was his burning sincerity—fanaticism. Secondly, his thorough analysis of the German people, their strength and weaknesses, and the amazingly clever approach to them. He may be an idealist in his own way but he is intensely practical. The very weakness and falsity of the argument—its racialism and the position of a master race allotted to the German people—was just such as to appeal to the Germans.

[1] Entry in Prison Diary, 24 July 1941, from SWJN, Vol. 11, pp. 656–7.

9

C. Rajagopalachari[1]

C. Rajagopalachari, known all over India as CR, is a much more subtle and complex character. He has one of the finest minds in India, keenly analytical and like a razor's edge. He represents the best type of the south Indian Brahmin intellect, and the standard among the Brahmins of the south is high. He is brilliant and yet an iron discipline keeps even that brilliance in check and there is no ornate display of it. A successful lawyer turned philosopher, and then a man of action and a politician, he has come to the top, apparently without any effort, in whatever activity he has indulged in. His life has been one of selflessness and of giving up what he had or could have had, and he has sought nothing for himself. But there is a trace of intellectual arrogance and impatience at others' slowness. He is efficient and keen on getting things done, but in his own way.

CR is not attractive at first sight, especially with his dark glasses which make his face look harder than it is. But the face itself is a striking one and full of sadness. It bears obvious traces of the many battles he has fought within himself, which have produced in him a strange mixture of serenity and absence of temper, with flashes of inner turmoil and hardness. His relations with Gandhi have been peculiar and full of interest. He was attracted by him and his outlook on life even before Gandhi became an all-India figure. Deliberately and through his mind, he accepted that outlook and adapted his own life to it. But he was utterly unlike most of the others who fell under Gandhi's spell, for he was not the kind of man who mentally submits to another. Having accepted a philosophy of life, he interpreted it in his own way and would not always accept even Gandhi's interpretation. Quietly and without raising his voice, he would argue for his own viewpoint and gradually undermine the mental defences of those who disagreed with him. If, even so, he failed to convert the majority, he would accept the decision as a matter of discipline, but his mind continued its rebellious career. The mind did not surrender or submit, though the voice agreed to the inevitable.

Such a man seldom gains popularity with the crowd, but his outstanding ability and the record of his life of self-denial were such that he triumphed even

[1] A Postscript to *An Autobiography*, 1 November 1941. Excerpts.

in this. He gained popularity and, even more so, respect. There were those who did not like him, and they either hated him or feared him. Yet he had the capacity to win over those who had disliked him.

Between CR and me there was an instinctive and fundamental difference in political outlook and this has not lessened as time has gone by. But the more I knew him, the more I liked him, and always I was discovering new points in common. It was always a pleasure to talk to him and discuss any subject—his range is wide and his reading extensive. Underneath his hard and sad exterior, he is surprisingly human and his public speeches are full of flashes of humour which light up a dry subject. He is strangely emotional and very sensitive beneath that hard surface of his, and sometimes this has led him to sudden acts. In 1936 he was upset by some developments in the provincial politics of Madras and he retired completely from the Congress and all public life to return as Chief Minister a year later. Always there is a sense of mystery about him, of unplumbed depths, and he draws himself in, producing an impression of shyness. He has found refuge in the philosophy of the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Upanishads*, but his aggressive mind occasionally breaks through that refuge.

10

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan[1]

For various reasons, and chiefly because of British policy, the Frontier Province, and even more the tribal areas, were long isolated from the rest of India and were supposed to be lands of mystery and violent deeds. A mental barrier, based on ignorance and fear, was deliberately built up by our foreign rulers, and a policy was pursued which not only resulted in continuous harassment of the tribal people and in vast expenditure of Indian money and resources, but, what was worse, is breeding ill will all round. That policy continues still; yet the barrier has already been pierced.

That barrier was shaken by the winds that blew all over India waking the masses from their long slumber and lethargy. The national movement spread from the wide plains to the mountain valleys and reached the narrow defiles of the Khyber Pass. That barrier was pierced ultimately by that remarkable man, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, whom his own people and we delight to call Badshah Khan and *Fakhr-e-Afghan.*[2]

When the history of the present day comes to be written only very few of those who occupy public attention now will perhaps find mention in it. But among those very few there will be the outstanding and commanding figure of Badshah Khan. Straight and simple, faithful and true, with a finely chiselled face that compels attention, and a character built up in the fire of long suffering and painful ordeal, full of the hardness of the man of faith believing in his mission, and yet soft with the gentleness of one who loves his kind exceedingly. Watch him among his own people as they gather round him and look up to him with affection and admiration. He speaks to them in his well-loved Pushtoo, and though he may chide them often enough for their failings, his voice is soft and gentle and full of tenderness. Watch him again with little children with his eyes sparkling as he plays with them and his hard face resolving into frequent laughter. . . .

I have written about Abdul Ghaffar Khan. There is nothing so surprising about our Frontier Province than the conversion of a warlike people to the

[1] Allahabad, 5 June 1942. Foreword to *Frontier Speaks* (Bombay 1947). Excerpts.
[2] Pride of the Afghans.

doctrine of nonviolence. That conversion is, of course, far from complete and the Pathan does not worry himself about philosophical or metaphysical speculations. But it is patent that in action he has been remarkably nonviolent. The man who has loved his gun better than his child or brother, who has valued life cheaply and cared nought for death, who has avenged the slightest insult with the thrust of a dagger, suddenly became the bravest and most enduring of India's nonviolent soldiers. That was due undoubtedly to the influence of one man—Abdul Ghaffar Khan—whose word was almost law to his people, for they loved him and trusted him. The remarkable thing is that Badshah Khan, typical Pathan that he is, should have taken to nonviolence so earnestly and so thoroughly. He influenced thereby not only his own province but other parts of India also.

The future is dark with uncertainty all over the world. At India's threshold stand new invaders and the Empire that has so long dominated over us fades away. Curiously enough the Frontier Province, through which danger came in the past, is at present perhaps the farthest removed from risk of invasion, and the eastern borderland and the entire sea coast of India is the new frontier that is open to invasion. That in itself is significant of the way events are changing the face of things.

We are face to face with perils and dangers and no man can tell what the outcome will be. But in this perilous hour it is good to think of our comrades of the Frontier, brave men and true, who have marched with us so often through the valley of the shadow.

11

Rabindranath Tagore[1]

It is just a year ago that I heard in Dehra Dun Jail of Gurudev's death. Suddenly I felt very lonely for his mere presence in distant Santiniketan was an abiding comfort and an inspiration. The warmth of his genius surrounded me, as it did so many others, and produced in me a sense of companionship. To be deprived of this was loneliness and desolation.

And yet the sorrow, intense as it was, soon gave place to pride and triumph. It was well with India if she could produce, even in her present subject and lowly state, such a magnificent person. He was a great poet, a great artist, a great patriot, but he was above all a man of giant stature in a world of pigmies. That India should have produced him and another mighty personality, Gandhi, in the course of one generation filled me with wonder and the glow of pride in my country. It was well with India, I thought, for the springs of her youth had not dried up and her vital energy still flowed out to enrich the world. From what vast store did this come, and what was her strange secret which enabled her to renew her youth from age to age?

Tagore and Gandhi, each in his different way, was a symbol of India, steeped in her ancient culture and drawing strength and sustenance from her. How typical they were of India, and yet how utterly different from each other! Possibly no other country could have produced them, and they had their roots deep down in the Indian soil and their minds roamed over the many thousands of years that have gone to make India what she is. And yet they were men of the present day, intensely alive to the day's problems. Both of them, in their respective and wholly different ways, represented that wonderful continuity of India's cultural tradition which has known no break though disaster has so often laid her low.

Typical of India as Tagore was, yet he was typical also of the wide world today, as well as of the world of tomorrow. He showed us how India might be intensely national and yet, at the same time, international with her thought and sympathy embracing the world. In the midst of our national struggle, he created that symbol of internationalism that is Visva Bharati.

[1] Message on the Tagore Anniversary, Bombay, 7 August 1942. JN Papers, NMML. Excerpts.

Standing on the edge of a precipice, as we all do today, my mind goes back to that great and magnificent message which Gurudev gave to his country and the world on his eightieth birthday. That was his last will and testament. Out of the store of his rich mind and experience, he gave that final message. In line with the ancient sages and great men of India, he spoke to us of our country's sorrow, at the crisis that had overtaken civilization in the western world. As I read that message in prison it seemed to me that I heard the voice of India herself whispering in my ears. Today that message comes back to me and that lesson is imprinted in my mind. It were well if all of us, in Asia or Europe or America, paid heed to it for we are being swept away by the passions of the moment, and war, that great falsifier, is perverting and degrading our minds.

With reverence and pride in him and in India, I pay my homage to Gurudev.

12

Madan Mohan Malaviya[1]

Sir, may I crave your leave to refer to the passing away yesterday afternoon of a giant among men, a great Indian, one who was a Member of this Assembly for a long number of years and who was also a Member of the Imperial Legislative Council which preceded this Assembly. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya died yesterday afternoon at the ripe age of 85, and with his passing away, perhaps it may be said that a certain age in Indian politics closes. He was one of those giants who laid the foundations of modern Indian nationalism, and, year by year, he laid the foundations and built brick by brick and stone by stone the noble edifice of Indian freedom. They laboured in days when they had to face enormous difficulties, they had little support and we, who have succeeded to them and we, who have in a large measure been benefited by their labours, perhaps hardly realize the conditions in which they began this work. Many of us think, looking back to those days, that those people who worked then were not quite so advanced as we are, they were more moderate, more accommodating or compromising, not realizing that the environment in which they worked was infinitely more difficult than the one in which we work now. We have changed since then. We have our difficulties which in some ways are greater. Nevertheless, we function in an entirely different atmosphere and it is a little difficult to capture the air, the atmosphere of those old days. Some of us, many of us, have grown up under, what shall I say, the tradition of some of those elders of the national movement. Speaking for myself, almost my earliest memories of childhood are connected so far as Indian politics are concerned with Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. Somehow Indian politics took shape in my boyish eyes with Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya's face and figure. I remember still those early days as a boy when I listened to his brilliant oratory and was powerfully moved. I remember in later years, it was 27 years ago in the Imperial Legislative Council, when I sat in the visitors' gallery listening to his tremendous oration in regard to the Punjab martial law events.[2] Whether one agreed with him or

[1] Speech in the Legislative Assembly, 13 November 1946. *Legislative Assembly Debates, Official Report*, Vol. VIII, 1946, 12 November 1946–18 November 1946, p. 958. Excerpts.

[2] In 1919 Malaviya had strongly opposed the Rowlatt Bills and the Indemnity Bill which sought to exonerate officials from the responsibility for the excesses during the martial law regime in the Punjab.

whether one differed from him, I doubt if there is anyone in India who did not respect him, who did not admire him and who was not affected by his very lovable, kind and gentle personality. So, now, when this last of the old giants is gone, perhaps at the right time—one cannot expect anyone to live on and on for ever and ever—nevertheless it is something which affects us all very much, as always a break with a certain age affects one and certainly in regard to a person like Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya who has been not only a kind of father of Indian nationalism but almost a father to many of us and under whose shadow we learnt much about public service, it is a deep wrench. He was not merely a figure working and speaking in Assemblies, but as the world knows, he left enormous achievements to his credit, chief among them being the great University at Benares which he established.[3]

[3] The Benares Hindu University was established in 1921 with the donations collected mainly by Malaviya.

13

Srinivasa Ramanujam[1]

Mathematics in India inevitably makes one think of one extraordinary figure of recent times. This was Srinivasa Ramanujam. Born in a poor Brahmin family in south India, having no opportunities for a proper education, he became a clerk in the Madras Port Trust. But he was bubbling over with some irrepressible quality of instinctive genius and played about with numbers and equations in his spare time. By a lucky chance he attracted the attention of a mathematician who sent some of his amateur work to Cambridge in England. People there were impressed and a scholarship was arranged for him. So he left his clerk's job and went to Cambridge and during a very brief period there did work of profound value and amazing originality. The Royal Society of England went rather out of their way and made him a Fellow, but he died two years later, probably of tuberculosis, at the age of thirty-three. Professor Julian Huxley has, I believe, referred to him somewhere as the greatest mathematician of the century.

Ramanujam's brief life and death are symbolic of conditions in India. Of our millions how few get any education at all, how many live on the verge of starvation; of even those who get some education how many have nothing to look forward to but a clerkship in some office on a pay that is usually far less than the unemployment dole in England. If life opened its gates to them and offered them food and healthy conditions of living and education and opportunities of growth, how many among these millions would be eminent scientists, educationists, technicians, industrialists, writers and artists, helping to build a new India and a new world!

[1] From *The Discovery of India*, p. 221.

14

Aruna Asaf Ali[1]

It is easy to criticize any set of views in this complicated world that we live in. And Aruna Asaf Ali often says and writes something that is liable to criticism. But that criticism, however justified, would be poor stuff, for it would deal with some superficial aspect of a living, vibrant and challenging personality, who has shaken up many a sleeping person and become in many ways a symbol of these changing times.

Symbols are often disturbing and challenges are disconcerting. And so Aruna is both a disturbing and disconcerting individual to many. She does not fit in easily into the usual pattern, and perhaps she deliberately avoids doing so. She feels that she has a mission and is anxious to live up to it. The real crusaders are always few in number and there is something of the crusader, to a cause to which she is passionately attached, about her.

A crusader produces varying reactions on different people. The very force of personality and will attracts, and charms, and compels attention. And yet many people, afraid of this very compulsion of a personality or feeling uncomfortable because they are continually reminded of the crusade which might have the effect of upsetting their lives, do not like this impact. They prefer the normal routine of their lives.

Most of us go through that routine untouched and uninfluenced by external events or by the attraction of a great purpose. Some feel that attraction intellectually and try to work to that end, though without upsetting the even tenor of their lives. Yet others, few in number, feel in addition to the intellectual attraction a powerful emotional urge which drives them incessantly to action. That emotional urge comes usually not by the reading of books but by the impact of events.

During the last quarter of a century or more events have often moved fast in India bringing in their train shock and surprise, frustration and exhilaration. Many among us have been so affected by this shock of events that our lives and even our inner being have undergone a transformation.

That was the effect in 1919 and 1920 on a very large number of persons as a result of Gandhiji's leadership in the national movement. Ten years later

[1] Foreword to *Travel Talk* by Aruna Asaf Ali (1947).

another wave passed over the land sweeping thousands of men and women and influencing millions. Yet again, in the early forties India was convulsed and out of this convulsion new symbols arose, stern and unbending and with something of iron in their souls. Aruna Asaf Ali was no newcomer on the political scene. But 1942 transformed her and made her different from what she had been. She stood out as an extraordinarily courageous fighter for India's freedom and because she was a woman and daughter of India, she struck even more the imagination of the Indian people.

Among the many strange things that have happened in India during this quarter of a century, perhaps the most notable is the emergence of Indian womanhood. Large numbers of Indian women have played an important role in our struggle for freedom. Many of them have stood out by their ability, capacity for organization and self-sacrifice for a cause. Some of them can be ranked very high in any assembly of women all over the world. This fact, more than any other, demonstrates the renaissance of the Indian people and the strong foundations on which we have built our movement for freedom.

15

Aung San[1]

I have learnt with deep grief of the terrible tragedy that took place this morning in Rangoon when a number of gangsters pushed their way into a room where the Executive Council was meeting and shot down General Aung San and a number of other Members of the Council. This cold-blooded murder of Burmese popular leaders at a time when they were on the eve of their independence is tragic beyond words. I mourn for Aung San, friend and comrade, who even in his youth had become the architect of Burmese freedom and the acknowledged leader of her people. I mourn also for his comrades who are dead. I mourn for Burma bereft at this critical moment of her chosen leaders, and I mourn for Asia who has lost one of her bravest and most far-seeing sons.

This tragedy is a reminder to us of the horrors and disasters that violence and indiscipline bring in their train. They are the enemies of freedom and their offspring are chaos and misery. We in India have passed through terrible days full of violence and atrocity. Let each one of us search his heart and reflect on where this leads to. India and Burma and Asia indulge in violence at the peril of their freedom. All our fair dreams will vanish if we cannot pull ourselves up and think straight and act straight at this critical moment in our history. Above all we have to put an end to all indiscipline and act together and in an organized way to face all anti-social elements and put an end to their activities. This is no time for legal quibbling or for personal rivalry. The present faces us both with its tragedy and difficulty and its hope for the future. It is in this present that we must act if we are to have any future worth living for.

To the people of Burma I offer sincerest sympathy on my behalf and on behalf of the people of India. India will stand by them in the difficult days ahead.

[1] Statement to the press, New Delhi, 19 July 1947. *The Hindustan Times*, 20 July 1947.

16

Sarojini Naidu[1]

The captains and kings of my generation depart, old friends and dear comrades pass away, and now the dearest and brightest of them is gone. I feel desolate of heart and willowed in spirit.

Though Sarojini Devi's strength ebbed out, her indomitable spirit held aloft. Men and women of this country, have you the spirit to carry the torch and hold it aloft? May it be given to us to give India what she gave.

What was she whom we mourn today? She was a nationalist and a great international figure. Our history and the history of the world will speak of her. She was a dreamer of dreams, singer of songs, a crusader of a great cause. She was for ever full of life. For fifty years she led a full and dynamic life and what she touched, she dignified.

She was *sarva priya*. Not all the passions and prejudices of the moment moved her from tolerance. She was symbolic of a manifold culture. We remember her as a comrade, a spirit full of joy and laughter, and because of that she will never die.

I pay homage to the great daughter of India and through her to the womanhood of India; whatever we have achieved I think we owe it to Sarojini Naidu. What I am today is partly due to the inspiration from Sarojini Devi. When I heard her thirty-three years ago from the platform of the National Congress, I was greatly thrilled as I was thrilled later whenever I heard her.

[1] Broadcast from Lucknow station of All India Radio on the death of Sarojini Naidu, 2 March 1949. From *The Hindustan Times*, 3 March 1949.

17

Ramakrishna Paramahamsa[1]

I do not know that I am particularly fitted to speak about the life and teaching of Sri Ramakrishna, because he was a man of God and I am a man of earth and engaged in earthly activities which consume all my energy. But even a man of earth can admire and perhaps be influenced by a man of God, and so I have been admiring godly men, though sometimes I do not altogether understand; and though I do not fully understand what they said, I have admired these great men of God, and have been influenced by reading what was written about them by their disciples.

These extraordinary personalities have powerfully influenced their generation and the succeeding generations. They have powerfully influenced great men and changed the whole tenor of their lives. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa obviously was completely outside the run of average humanity. He appears to be in the tradition of the great rishis of India, who have come from time to time to draw our attention to the higher things of life and of the spirit.

. . . What made India great was her broad-mindedness. It was her conviction that truth is many-sided and of infinite variety. How can any man presume to say that he only has grasped the entire truth? If he is earnest in the search of truth, he may say that he saw a particular face of truth but how can he say that somebody else has not seen truth, unless he follows a similar path? So India encourages the pursuit of truth, and of moral values, and that was perhaps the most distinctive feature of India's culture. And in spite of the many ups and downs of her history something of the original impress continues throughout these long ages.

One of the effects of Sri Ramakrishna's life was the peculiar way in which he influenced other people who came in contact with him. Men often scoffed from a distance at this man of no learning, and yet when they came to him, very soon they bowed their heads before this man of God and ceased to scoff and 'remained to pray'. They gave up, many of them, their ordinary vocations in life and business and joined the band of devotees. They were great men and one of them better known than the others not only in India but in other parts of the

[1] *Bharat Jyoti* (2 May 1949).

world is Swami Vivekananda. . . . He gave us something which brings us, if I may use the word, a certain pride in our inheritance. He did not spare us, he talked of our weaknesses and our failings too. He did not wish to hide anything. Indeed he should not. Because we have to correct those failings, he deals with those failings also. Sometimes he strikes hard at us but sometimes points out the great things for which India stood and which even in the days of India's downfall made her, in some measure, continue to be great.

18

Vallabhbhai Patel[1]

At nine thirty-seven on the morning of Friday, December 15, 1950, the hand of death fell on Sardar Patel and put an end to the life of a great Indian and an unmatched warrior in the cause of freedom, a lover of India, a great servant of the people and a statesman of genius and mighty achievement. The same evening, in the city of Bombay, where he had laboured for a great part of his life in the cause of India's freedom, his mortal remains were reduced to ashes.

More than thirty-four years ago, he fell under the spell of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, and from that day onwards his magnificent talents and abounding energy were devoted to the struggle for India's freedom. By his matchless courage, inflexible sense of discipline, and genius for organization, he became one of the principal lieutenants of the Father of the Nation and a great leader in India's struggle. His championship of the poor and underprivileged made him the leader of the peasant campaign at Bardoli. The success of that movement demonstrated his capacity for leadership and his great organizing power. Under that leadership the peasants of Bardoli maintained the strictest discipline in the face often of grave provocation. Bardoli became a symbol and an inspiration to the rest of India.

In failing health he continued, without rest or respite, his service of India. When freedom came at last to India, it was inevitable that he should take an outstanding part in the service of free India. It was fortunate for India that Sardar Patel should have had this opportunity to put the coping-stone to his life's labour. He had, as it now appears, only a little more than three years to give in that service, and these years were periods of great turmoil and conflict in India and the world and, for him personally, of increasing ill-health and physical weakness. Yet his achievements during this period will be recorded in India's history with pride and admiration. He concentrated his attention on the great task of unifying the country and maintaining its stability at a time when disruptive forces were at work. In particular, his genius was demonstrated in the way he handled the difficult and complicated problem of the old Indian States.

[1] Resolution mourning the death of Vallabhbhai Patel, drafted by Nehru for the Cabinet meeting on 16 December 1950. JN Papers, NMML.

He fixed his goal, a united and strong India, and set about to achieve it with skill and determination. Step by step he advanced towards this goal, ever keeping the final objective before himself and others and at the same time by negotiation and friendly compromise winning the willing consent of the people he was dealing with. Thus, without any ill-feeling on the part of the rulers or the people of those States, he made a united India out of a welter of States, whose separate existence would have been a powerful force for disintegration in these troublous times.

He devoted himself also to the maintenance of peace and stability of India which were continuously challenged by internal strife and by the conflict that has been the heritage of the post-war world all over.

As Deputy Prime Minister and in charge of two of the most important portfolios of Home and States, a heavy responsibility was cast upon him. That burden and responsibility he bore with patient courage, wisdom and equanimity. To the people of India and to the Governments at the Centre and in the States, the loss of Sardar Patel is grievous and irreplaceable. Yet he laid solid foundations and that work has to be carried on by those that follow him. It is for the people of the country to follow his shining example, his devotion to duty, his steadfastness, his sense of discipline, and thus to realize in ever growing degree that free and strong and prosperous India for which he laboured. That will be the true and imperishable monument to his memory and that of the Father of the Nation who led him to his path of destiny.

19

Joseph Stalin[1]

Sir, I crave your indulgence at the commencement of the proceedings to refer to an event of which the House is no doubt aware. In the early hours of this morning Marshal Stalin passed away. . . . When we think of Marshal Stalin, all kinds of thoughts come to our minds, at least to my mind, and the panorama of history for the last thirty-five years passes before our eyes. All of us here are children of this age and have been affected by it in many ways. We have grown up not only participating in our struggles in this country but participating in another way with the mighty struggles that have taken place in this world, and been affected by them. And so looking back at these thirty-five years or so, many figures stand out, but perhaps no single figure has moulded and affected and influenced the history of these years more than Marshal Stalin. He became gradually almost a legendary figure, sometimes a man of mystery, at other times a person who had an intimate bond not with a few but with vast numbers of persons. He proved himself great in peace and in war. He showed an indomitable will and courage which few possess, but perhaps when history comes to be written many things will be said about him and I do not know what opinions, what varying opinions, subsequent generations may record, but every one will agree that here was a man of giant stature, a man such as few who had moulded the destinies of his age, a man—although he succeeded greatly in war—who ultimately would be remembered by the way he built up his great country. Again, people may agree or disagree with many things that he did or said, but the fact remains of his building up that great country, which was a tremendous achievement, and in addition to that the remarkable fact, which can be said about very, very few persons is that he was not only famous in his generation but as I referred to, he was in a sense, 'intimate', if I may say so, with vast numbers of human beings, not only the vast numbers in the Soviet Union with whom he moved in an intimate way, in a friendly way, in an almost family way, but many others too outside who felt that way. I have known people who were associated with Marshal Stalin, who disagreed with him subsequently or who

[1] Statement in House of the People, 6 March 1953. *Parliamentary Debates (House of the People)*, Official Report, Vol. I, Pt. II, cols. 1567–70. Excerpts.

associated themselves with the work that Marshal Stalin did and then who subsequently disagreed with him and came and told me that while they disagreed with him, they felt a personal wrench because of a personal bond that had arisen between him and them, even though they had not come near him or had only seen him from a distance. So here was this man who created in his lifetime this bond of affection and admiration among vast numbers of human beings, a man who has gone through this troubled period of history. He may in the opinion of some have made mistakes or succeeded—it is immaterial. But everyone must necessarily agree about his giant stature and about his mighty achievements. So it is right that we should pay our tribute to him on this occasion because the occasion is not merely the passing away of a great figure but perhaps in a sense also a greater change. I mean in the sense of the ending of a certain era in history. Of course, history is continuous and it is rather absurd perhaps to divide it up in periods like this, as historians and others seek to do; it goes on and on. Nevertheless there are periods which seem to end and take a fresh lease of life and, undoubtedly, when a very great man passes away, who has embodied his age to a great extent, in a certain measure, there is the end of that particular period. I do not know what the future will hold, but undoubtedly even though Marshal Stalin has passed away, because of the great hold he had on peoples' minds and even hearts, his influence and memory will continue to exercise peoples' minds and inspire them. He has been described by many persons, including some who have been his great opponents in the world stage, and those descriptions vary and sometimes are contradictory. Some of them describe him as frank and even gentle person. Others describe him as hard and ruthless, and may be he had all these features in him. Anyhow a very great figure has passed away. He was, I believe, technicially not the head of the Soviet State—we make reference to the passing of high dignitaries and especially Heads of State—but Marshal Stalin was something much more than the Head of a State. He was great in his own right, whether he occupied the office or not. I believe that his influence was exercised generally in favour of peace. When war came he proved himself a very great warrior, but from all the information that we have had, his influence has been in favour of peace. Even in these present days of trouble and conflict, I earnestly hope that his passing away will not mean that that influence which was exercised in favour of peace is not longer to be availed of. Perhaps, if I may express the hope, this event may loosen all our minds a little from their rigidity in all countries, and that we may view the present problems of the world not in that rigid way which develops when people are continually in conflict and argument with each other, but in a somewhat more responsive and understanding way, so that his death may serve to bring us more to think of this troubled world, and to endeavour even more than before to secure peace in this world and to prevent any further disasters and catastrophes from occurring.

20

John Fitzgerald Kennedy[1]

We meet here today under the shadow of shock and sorrow. To many of us, it is a personal shock and grief. But the crime that has been committed was something more than a personal one. It was a crime against humanity. A man has been struck down in the pride of youth and achievement: a man of ideals, vision and courage, who sought to serve his own people as well as the larger causes of the world.

President Kennedy revived among his people the ideals enshrined in the American Constitution and, in a changing world, sought to apply them to the problems of today. He endeavoured, not without success, to work for the removal of the tensions that burden and distract the world and to ensure an abiding peace. He devoted himself to the removal of injustice and inequalities among men. In his own great country, he laboured for civil liberty and worked so that Negroes might enjoy full freedom and opportunity without discrimination based on race or colour. In the wider world outside, a great part of which still suffers from poverty and lack of opportunities for growth, he threw his great energy and weight in favour of the development of underdeveloped countries, so that people everywhere should have the blessings of freedom and the advantages that modern science and technology give. Wealth and prosperity came to his own country. To these, President Kennedy added a deeper human and moral outlook which embraced in its scope the peoples of the world.

To these great causes he dedicated himself, and the picture of a great president emerged, which brought a measure of hope to the peoples of the world. To his high office he gave lustre and grace, and people in distant parts of the world looked upon him with hope and affection. The memory of his great predecessor, Abraham Lincoln, the emancipator, was revived, and in the confusion and conflicts of the present-day world came a vision of the 'self-evident truths' that all men are created equal and have certain inalienable rights, and till these are fully achieved, the vision of the founders of the American Republic will not be realized in its completeness.

[1] Statement in the Lok Sabha, 25 November 1963. JN Papers, NMML. Excerpts.

. . . A great President and a great man is dead, struck down by one of his own countrymen. We sorrow for this, as indeed we must, but perhaps he has served the causes he cherished by his death even as he laboured for them in his life. Let us all draw inspiration from his fragrant memory and pay our homage to it.

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1

Vicarious Charity[1]

Sir,

The Independent announced a few days ago that a number of donations have been promised for the proposed Lucknow University. In the list of donors appeared the names of "Sessendi Estate[2] Rs. 1,00,000", and "The tenants of Sessendi Estate, Rs. 50,000". The cause of education is dear to us all, and everyone in this province wishes the brightest of future to the new University. It is pleasing to see that the appeal for funds for the public objects by, or on behalf of the Government has, in the hands of underlings, become a method of extortion and oppression and it is high time that an effective stop was put to it. Many of us have some knowledge of the methods which were adopted to swell the numerous War Funds and War Loans. Are these methods going to be repeated in Oudh? The Sessendi Estate is at present under the Court of Wards, the taluqdar being considered, for some reason or another, unfit to manage his own estate. What right has the Court of Wards under these circumstances to part with large sums of their ward's money even for such a laudable object as the Lucknow University? I do not know if any consent was taken from the taluqdar in question. But such consent, even if taken, can count for little. If the taluqdar is not competent to manage his own estate he is hardly competent to exercise a wise discretion in the matter of large donations.

But far more important questions arise out of the announcement of the tenants' donation. The lot of the tenants in Oudh is not an enviable one. At this moment the relations between the tenants and the taluqdars in some parts of Oudh are far from happy. And yet a sum of fifty thousand is promised on behalf of the tenantry of one estate. It is difficult to understand how this round sum was arrived at. Was a plebiscite of the tenants taken? In what manner were they consulted and how many of them were consulted? Were the methods of the War Loan meetings repeated here and a small gathering got up to pass a mock resolution promising this lordly sum to the proposed university? Did the tenants *suo motu* and out of their generosity offer this donation or was there any

[1] Letter to the Editor, *The Independent*, 3 July 1920, SWJN, Vol. 1, pp. 205–6.

[2] Sessendi was the largest village in the Pargana of Nigohan in Mohanlalganj Tahsil, Lucknow District.

pressure exercised? How is this sum to be rateably distributed over the tenantry and how will it be collected? Will it take the form of a tax like the well-known *Hathiauna* or the modern *Motorauna*[3] taxes indulged in by many taluqdars? Will the payment of this be voluntary or enforced?

These are a few of the questions which arise and which demand an answer. It is bad enough for illegal exactions and oppression to take place in the domains of illiterate and self-seeking taluqdars who manage their own estates. It is far worse for the Government as represented by the Court of Wards to encourage such practices.

Mussoorie,
27 June 1920

Yours etc.,
Jawaharlal Nehru

[3] Exactions made in the form of ostensible gifts from the peasantry on the occasion of purchase of an elephant or a car by taluqdars.

2

Victory Over the Air[1]

About eighteen years ago, when I was a student at Cambridge, I saw aeroplanes flying in Germany and France. Before that also I had heard that in America the Wright brothers had demonstrated that they could fly in a machine heavier than air. Some used to fly two yards higher than the ground; now they can fly at an altitude of 200 to 300 yards. This was the first time when a man flew in the air in a heavy machine. Before this, people had flown in balloons by filling them with gas and making them lighter than air, but that was a different principle. After the Wright brothers, it was known that a Frenchman, Santos Dumont, had also succeeded in flying a similar machine.

After that news of quick progress started pouring in. Bleriot crossed the Channel and flew from France to England. Thereafter an aeroplane in the sky ceased to be much of a surprise.

About eighteen years ago, I was in Berlin. Count Zeppelin was to arrive in his famous airship after a long flight. There was great publicity and a vast number of people had come to welcome him. We also went to the field where he was to land. There was a great rush, and some 15 to 20 lakhs of people had gathered there. The Kaiser also, with all his officers, was there in great pomp. The airship came in at the correct time and it was greeted with great delight. All round, the German *'hoch', 'hoch'* could be heard. I was trying to take some photographs with my small camera. They are still with me. The hotel in which we had stayed that night gave us a very nice photograph of Count Zeppelin. That too is with me still.

That was eighteen years ago. Since then man has mastered the air to a great extent and the aeroplanes improved tremendously. Today thousands of passengers travel by air every day and from big cities aeroplanes carrying passengers fly every day. I also had two occasions to travel by air, once from London to Paris and then from London to Ostend.

But it was in Paris, only two months ago, that I realized how much progress had been made. Two Frenchmen, Chungressor and Coley, tried to fly direct to America from Paris. It was a very difficult and dangerous journey. All Paris was full of joy and of anxiety. A few hours after their departure, the news came

[1] *Aaj*, 28 September 1927. Original in Hindi. SWJN, Vol. 6, pp. 364–7. Excerpts.

that they had succeeded and reached America. There was rejoicing in every street in Paris. The big stores stopped working for sometime and everybody started congratulating everyone else. The house of the old mother of Chungressor was swamped with flowers. But the happiness was short-lived. It was realized that the news was false and that in fact the whereabouts of the two heroes were not known. Thereafter there was an incessant search but they could be found nowhere and it became certain that the two had found their grave in the Atlantic.

Paris was in mourning. After a few days the news came that a boy from New York was flying to Paris all alone. All were laughing at his foolishness. He was alone and had no means of communication or any special equipment in the plane. For thousands of miles, between sky and ocean, a slight defect in his aeroplane or any mistake of his own—and let alone seeking help, he would not have been even found. But this fool committed the folly of courage and straight as an arrow he came over Paris. The French did not much like this—an American success—where their own countrymen had failed and died. But the courage of Lindbergh won the hearts of the people, and he was welcomed in Paris and in other cities of Europe in a way in which even kings have not been received. As for America—the whole continent went mad about him. Had Lindbergh lost his head, no one would have been surprised. Even old and experienced men become arrogant on such occasions, and he was just a boy. But a greater miracle than even flying the Atlantic was the self-control that he showed. He did not let this massive applause and excitement go to his head. He was offered crores of rupees, but he refused to accept any money.

From where did this wonderful boy learn that daring and that patience? Lindbergh is considered as a god in the United States today but very few people know that his father was considered to be a rebel in his own country. He was a senator who fought for freedom and justice in the teeth of opposition. Such people are not very much liked. When the United States went to war against Germany in the Great War, the senior Lindbergh opposed it and was widely criticized. He could not get a platform to speak from and he was called a revolutionary. Had he been living today, the very people who are hailing his son to the skies would have called the father a Bolshevik. When he died he was not buried in the normal way, but he was cremated and his son took his ashes up in an aeroplane and scattered them over his land. Knowing that Lindbergh is the son of that 'Bolshevik', one is not surprised at his courage.

After Lindbergh, the Atlantic has been crossed on two more occasions, and now attempts are still being made. Europe and America give much attention to flying. What about India? I do not know if our leaders pay any attention to this or whether our young men ever think of conquering the air in this manner and enhancing the prestige and power of our country. Our country is unfortunately in bondage and so neither our leaders nor our young can do much; but

still something can be done if attention is paid to it. England is full of Indians who, allured by the Bar, medicine or jobs, stay there undergoing all sorts of humiliation in London and Edinburgh. If even a few of them would dare to learn flying and shun the idea of jobs, they could be of so much benefit to India. After all our country also is going to be free and I think that will be soon. Where, after independence, shall we get persons who can fly aeroplanes? It is obvious even to the superficial observer that this victory over the air in Europe and America will bring far-reaching results to the world, the foremost being the effect on the methods of warfare. It is now established that the old-fashioned armies and ships cannot stand up to aeroplanes and gas. Aeroplanes can annihilate a big army and can ruin several cities with a bomb. The work of the ordinary army will gradually become what the police are doing today and guns and cannons will be reduced to the level of *lathis*. Our leaders, who are striving to secure for Indians also commission in the army, should consider this a little. Otherwise our officers and army will be mere glittering dummies on parade and be worth nothing else.

Passenger aeroplanes are today most common in Germany. According to the Versailles treaty, Germany cannot maintain military aircraft. She is therefore concentrating on passenger planes. The biggest aeroplane factories in Europe are in Germany. In one of these factories an Indian holds a high position. I was so pleased to see him, and my expectations rose that other countrymen of mine also will join this line. France too has progressed considerably in this matter. England is rather backward. Aeroplanes can fly well and flying can be developed more in a country which is large and has hundreds and thousands of miles of open country. For this reason, in the future, it may progress in America and Russia and perhaps in China too. There is also plenty of opportunity for flying in our country.

3

Politicians[1]

"Politics", said George III of England, "are a trade for a rascal, not a gentleman." The remark was perhaps a little exaggerated. And yet all of us who dabble in this trade weary of it at times and feel disgusted with it. Not unoften we see others in the trade, sometimes in our own ranks, more frequently in the ranks of our opponents, for there is less of charity in judging those who are not with us, who seem to demonstrate the truth of the dictum of the English King. It is strange to watch the making of a politician. A doctor has to go through a laborious course of training before he can venture to practise his profession and no sensible person will go to a quack or one without training for his treatment. So does the engineer, the electrician or any other expert in science or industry. No one will dream of asking a man who is not a trained engineer to build a bridge.

But no such training is required of the politician, and every man is good enough for the governance of his brother men. Professors and other highbrows of their kind may write fat books on the science of politics. They may tell us of social problems which are convulsing society and suggest solutions; they may delve deep into the laws of economics, of eugenics and sociology and try to fathom the psychology of man, and discuss a hundred other matters of import to the leader of men. But the politician does not bother himself with these musty tomes. He is content with his fund of "common sense" and is quite sure that this is sufficient equipment for him to take charge of the ship of state. But, alas! common sense is often common nonsense and the ship flounders frequently and brings disaster to many. But, strange as it may seem, repeated disasters have not exposed the politician for what he is or opened the eyes of the people to his utter incompetence. In highly advanced democratic England we see "Jix" of the Home Office behaving like a privileged buffoon attached to the royal courts of old, and Sir Austen Chamberlain making up in pomposity what he lacks in wisdom and sense, and of course our very own Lord Birkenhead who has such a pretty conceit about his own greatness and who is so lost in the contemplation of the grandeur that was F.E. Smith and is now Birkenhead.

[1] 10 July, 1928. *The Searchlight,* Anniversary Number, 1928. SWJN, Vol. III, pp. 390–2.

Such are the gods of England! It is no wonder that Romain Rolland has suggested that instead of talking about the outlawry of war we should outlaw these men who make war. We should outlaw the politicians.

But why go to distant England for examples when our own country can produce the choicest specimens. Perhaps in the days to come we may have a museum of historical curiosities, something after the fashion of Madame Tussaud's[2] exhibition with its chamber of horrors, which alas is no more. In this museum there will surely be exhibited models of many of our ministers and our executive councillors for the wonder of the coming generations. The teacher of youth in that happier age will show these sleek and shiny models to his students and tell them of the barbarous days of old when these people held sway and were charged with the direction of human affairs. He will point out that in those days not competence, nor wisdom, nor knowledge, not even the cruder qualities which capture the imagination of the crowd, were the tests for high office. Indeed they were disqualifications, and the greater and more abysmal the ignorance the more the chance of success in the race for office. He will tell them that truth and adherence to any principle were at a discount in this tribe of office-seekers and the prize usually fell to those who betrayed the cause they had stood for and gave the fullest evidence of inconsistency.

Every province of India will have its representation in this museum of curiosities. There will be the C.P. with its notorious example of a member of a party pledged to non-acceptance of office, casting his pledges and his principles to the four winds of heaven and developing overnight into an executive councillor.[3] Other provinces will be there also but surely the largest and the most prominent part will be that of the United Provinces of today. Chief amongst his peers will be the gallant Nawab[4] who presides so gracefully in frock coat and trousers over the domain of local self-government. Knight of many a plush carpet and a hero of green lawns, he pursues his primrose way from party to party. Not for him the straight and narrow path of knowledge. He disdains books and has not been known even by his intimates to read any except perhaps the lighter forms of literature to be found at the bookstalls of railway stations. His greatest friends cannot accuse him of dallying with anything that concerns intellect or of displaying any measure of intelligence. On his own subject of local self-government he has preserved a virgin mind, and knowing as much about it as he does of the condition of Mars can give an absolutely unbiased opinion.

[2] A famous exhibition of wax works in London. Madame Tussaud was a French lady who escaped to London at the time of the French Revolution.

[3] The reference is to S.P. Tambe, the Swarajist president of the Central Provinces Legislative Council. In October 1925 he accepted membership of the Governor's Executive Council without the knowledge of his colleagues and party leaders.

[4] Nawab Sir Mohammad Yusuf, Minister of Local Self-Government in U.P.

Another interesting model will be of the Nawab's new colleague, the noble Raja[5] whose conscience has convinced him that he must sacrifice himself at the altar of high office in spite of his opinions and convictions, in spite of his loudly declared views and protestations. The student of psychology will find him and his like an interesting study.

Many others there will be in this museum, and the future student will wonder at the strange dispensation under which wisdom and knowledge were specially lacking where they were most needed. He will wonder still more that any people should be so degraded or deluded as to tolerate even for an instant turncoats and ignoramuses. But if he has been a student of history he will know that such has been the fate of every country under alien rule. Evil flourishes thereunder and little of good. And he may recall the lines of a great poet of an earlier day about another land which suffered the agony of foreign domination:

> She stood before her traitors bound and bare,
> Clothed with her wounds and with her naked shame,
> As with a weed of fiery tears and flame,
> Their motherland, their common weal and care
> And they turned from her and denied, and swore
> They did not know this woman nor her name.
> And they took truce with tyrants and grew tame,
> And gathered up cast crowns and creeds to wear
> And rags and shards regilded—Then she took
> In her bruised hands their broken pledge, and eyed
> These men so late so loud upon her side
> With one inevitable and tearless look,
> That they might see her face whom they forsook;
> And they beheld what they had left, and died.

[5] Raja Jagannath Baksh Singh, deputy leader, U.P. Nationalist Party (which boycotted the Simon Commission), deserted his party when he was appointed Education Minister and cooperated with the Simon Commission.

4

The Proscription and Censorship of Books[1]

Human nature is notoriously perverse. One has but to forbid a thing or taboo it to make it attractive. And out of the fear of taboo and its fascination arises the eternal conflict in man, the age-long struggle to escape from the wiles of the evil one. But, alas, escape is difficult for Satan peeps in at every corner and beckons to the unwary, and perhaps even more so to those who have been forewarned. Even saints are not beyond his reach for legend tells us that the holy rishis were sorely tempted by the *apsaras* of Indra's court, and all the great ones of the earth have had to go through the slippery valley of temptation. On this conflict the scientists of the modern age have built up the structure of psychoanalysis and we are told that all the ills that flesh is heir to arise from this conflict and repressed desire.

What then is to be done? Is evil to be allowed to flourish unchecked lest the very checking of it increase its fascination? For undoubtedly the sins of this world would lose half their flavour if they were not forbidden to us. It may be that their chief attraction lies not in them but in the red livery that society makes them put on. Discard the livery and see them for what they are worth—naked and unbeautiful and unattractive. But it is not easy to do away with the livery and its fascination. Centuries of taboo have engraved it on our minds and hearts and only a long and laborious course of instruction can right our perspective.

What then can we do? "The easiest way to overcome temptation" said Oscar Wilde, "is to succumb to it." A certain method, no doubt in a way, but a curious one and not to be commended.

But let us leave these high problems to philosophers and psycho-analysts and the like. I am concerned at present with the banning of books. The papers have recently announced that the Viceroy or the Home Member or the Governor-General and his whole Council put together have proscribed a recent addition to the 'Today and Tomorrow' series. I have a soft corner for this series and have read and enjoyed a goodly number of its little books, and I am afraid

[1] This article, dated 6 March, appears to have been written in 1929. JN Miscellaneous Papers, NMML.

I am a little prejudiced against the Viceregal crowd. My sympathies were therefore entirely with the book without knowing in the least what it contained. With the perversity of human nature to which was added the perversity of the Indian politician I determined to read the book[2] in case chance threw it in my way. Subsequent researches however led me to the discovery that the book was largely a record of the adventures of the author in the brothels of Calcutta and from his ripe experience garnered in these surroundings he had judged India and prophesied about her future. He informs us that he encountered honourable members of Council in these haunts of his. Perhaps his experiences were confined to the pre–reform days; otherwise he might have encountered even bigger fry. For, may we whisper it? Those whom Viceroys and Governors delight to honour are seldom known for anything except ignorance and incompetence.

Presumably the Government has banned the book to protect the good name of India. There was I believe a cry for the banning of Katherine Mayo's *Mother India* also. But I must confess that I see no logic or sense in this suppression of books. From the larger point of view I do not believe in the official censoring or proscription of books in any country, much less in India where the official happens to be a foreigner. But even apart from this, if India is to be protected from the evil effects of the book it should be proscribed in other countries. No one in India is likely to be misled by a journalist's account of Calcutta brothels and his deductions therefrom.

It is a dangerous power in the hands of a government: the right to determine what shall be read and what shall not. And it almost always fails to achieve its object. Those who wish to do so can usually get hold of the proscribed book. In India the power is likely to be misused and has been misused a hundred times. We have to be careful therefore lest one right use of the power is held to justify its misuse on scores of occasions.

I believe that Mazzini's[3] *Essays* were long banned by the Government of India. A more flagrant instance of misuse of power it would be difficult to find. Savarkar's[4] history of the *War of Independence* is another famous example. It is a brilliant book though it suffers from prolixity and want of balance occasionally. I had occasion to read it in Europe and I have often felt that a new edition, more concise and with many of the oratorical flights left out, would be an ideal corrective to the British propaganda about the events of 1857. But I am afraid we shall have to wait for this till Swaraj comes.

Sometimes, I fear that even with Swaraj we may have to face a strict censorship. The spirit of puritanical censorship is evident enough in many quarters

[2] R.J. Minney, *Shiva or the Future of India* (London, 1929).

[3] Giuseppo Mazzini (1805–72); revolutionary theorist of the Italian Risorgimento and of European nationalism.

[4] Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883–1966); suffered incarceration and internment (1910–37) for his revolutionary activities; later leader of the Hindu Mahasabha.

in India today and, much as we may dislike it, some of us who desire no censorship of books may find ourselves in a minority then. Let us hope that we shall carry on the good fight against suppression of books even then. Meanwhile let us not be caught in a trap and give up a principle simply because we happen to think that a book that the Government has banned is undesirable.

5

Strikes[1]

Sir,

How heavy is the burden and how gallantly the white man shoulders it! Silver and gold are heavy to carry and dividends are apt to mount up and it is said that the possessor of them may not find it easy to enter the kingdom of heaven. The eye of the needle is small and will not permit the passage of a camel or of bags bulging with money. But, even at the cost of imperilling their immortal souls, the princes of finance and industry, the lords who control the destinies of oil and jute and steel and tinplate, insist on carrying the heavy burden.

Workers with little minds and no vision, with no appreciation of the majesty of the existing social structure whereunder they contribute their little mites so that palaces may arise to solace in their leisure moments the giants who shoulder the great burden, protest and strike and give trouble. Intent on their petty selves and unreasonably insistent on having enough to eat or something to wear or somewhere to live, they forget the larger purpose of things. Do we not all believe in the doctrine of evolution? Should not then the fittest survive? Who can be fitter than the Man of Money, lord of many a factory or field and master of many thousands of undistinguished and miserable persons labouring away so that the stream of dividends may never cease? What does it matter if the thousands or the millions starve or die? There are others to replace them.

In Jamshedpur, three months ago, there was a strike of tinplate workers who dared to make a few claims so that their lot might be a little better. That strike continues today. But the masters who rule over the Golmuri Tinplate Factory are no weaklings. They are made of stern stuff. Are they to be cowed down by a lot of miserable workers presuming to ask for something more than they have been getting? Never! What does it matter if the workers' demands are reasonable? If that is so it is all the more necessary to have no talks with them or discussions. Else what answer could be given to them? And so the strong,

[1] Letter to the Editor, 13 July 1929, *The Bombay Chronicle*, 18 July 1929. SWJN, Vol. 4, pp. 59–61.

silent men who manage the Golmuri Tinplate Factory continue their strong silent career. What does it matter if the condition of workers is bad or if they suffer? That is unfortunate no doubt but how are the managing agents or the directors responsible for nature's economic laws? But alas for the perversity of human nature! The strike continues and there are deep rumblings in the ranks of other workers in the employ of the same masters. People have even said hard things about the strong, silent men of Messrs. Shaw Wallace and Co.,[2] and have dared to suggest a boycott of the Burma Oil Company's oil and petrol.[3]

News comes that the workers in some jute factories have gone on strike. How ungrateful some people can be to those who provide them with work! Is it not a glorious destiny that we should all work and work till our backs are bent and our eyes are dim and our hands tremble so that mighty dividends should go forth to those who toil not but typify, in their highly cultured and aesthetic selves, the fine flower of modern civilization? Is it not a comforting thought that although the worker may have nothing to eat and his children are weak and hollow-eyed for lack of food, the master in his palace has an abundance of delicate viands which are wasted and thrown away for very excess? Low wages are apt to annoy. But surely any sensible worker will put up with them when he realizes that the result of his labour is a mighty dividend for some other people.

Some of the jute workers are on strike. But despite this, the lords of jute refuse to be deflected from the straight and narrow way which they have chalked out for themselves. And so, despite strikes, dividends continue to come. The Hooghly Mills Co. Ltd. has this year declared a dividend of 125 per cent. It is obvious that they had no special desire to profit. Large sums were put aside for depreciation and renewals. The managing agents no doubt got their share, which must have been considerable and a large sum was carried forward to the next year. Income tax and super tax consumed a substantial amount and preference shares got their ten per cent. But in spite of all this, much remained. What could one do with it but distribute it as a dividend of one hundred and twenty-five per cent free of income tax to the holders of ordinary shares?

The burden was a heavy one. True, it would have been light if a part of it had gone to the starving workers who had by their labour created the dividend. But was the white man, and his occasional brown colleague in this work of exploitation, going to say 'no' because the burden was heavy? Not they. Gallantly they shouldered it even though it was one hundred and twenty-five per cent free of income tax.

[2] Managing Agents of the Golmuri Tinplate Company.

[3] The Burma Oil Company held two-thirds of the shares of the Golmuri Tinplate Company.

Workers were striking outside asking for higher wages and better living conditions, a modest share in the wealth they were producing. What did it matter if they were miserable and starving? The white man was doing his duty. However heavy the burden he gallantly shouldered it.

Yours etc.,
Jawaharlal Nehru

6

Cooperatives[1]

Dear Ahobalacharya,

I may inform you that so far as I am personally concerned I am a very firm believer in the cooperative principle. I believe in it so much that I would like to introduce it in all departments of the state, including the whole structure of government. I would like to have a cooperative commonwealth and even to extend it on an international scale. If that is the ideal, the problem before us is how we can reach it. Cooperation has made a most tremendous progress in some of the western countries. It has made very little progress in India. Why is this so? Partly because the Government is not really desirous of increasing the cooperative spirit of the people. The whole structure of cooperation in India is an official-ridden structure.

It is of course possible to some extent to encourage private cooperative organizations and no doubt this should be done wherever possible. But it cannot be done on any large scale except by the state or with state help. It becomes necessary, therefore, to have political control before we can advance rapidly in any direction, whether that direction is cooperation or education or sanitation or anything else. What is necessary really is the development of the spirit of cooperation which is singularly absent in India. That can only come with proper education which is wholly lacking.

While, therefore, we can in our own way try to help by means of cooperation or otherwise, real help can only come on a nation-wide scale after political control is gained. That control, I agree with you, should be gained by the peasantry. Let the peasants control the destinies of India, and I have no doubt that the peasantry will flourish exceedingly. The problem before us is—how is the peasantry going to control India? To that we have to address ourselves. To ignore the political problems is to waste our energies in a fruitless effort.

Sincerely yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

[1] To T.L. Ahobalacharya, 7 October 1929, JN Papers, NMML. Excerpts.

7

Where do the Riches Go?[1]

18 January 1931

New and quicker ways of producing food and other things have been discovered in history from time to time. And you would, of course, think that if better methods were used for production, much more would be produced, and the world would be richer and everyone would have more. You would be partly right and partly wrong. Better methods of production have certainly made the world richer. But which part of the world? It is obvious enough that there is great poverty and misery still in our country, of course, but even in a rich country like England this is so. Why? Where do the riches go? It is a strange thing that in spite of more and more wealth being produced, the poor have remained poor. They have made some little progress in certain countries, but it is very little compared to the new wealth produced. We can easily see, however, to whom this wealth largely goes. It goes to those who, usually being the managers or organizers, see to it that they get the lion's share of everything good. And, stranger still, classes have grown up in society of people who do not even pretend to do any work, and yet who take this lion's share of the work of others! And—would you believe it?—these classes are honoured; and some foolish people imagine that it is degrading to have to work for one's living! Such is the topsy-turvy condition of our world. Is it surprising that the peasant in his field and the worker in his factory are poor, although they produce the food and wealth of the world? We talk of freedom for our country, but what will any freedom be worth unless it puts an end to this topsy-turvydom, and gives to the man who does the work the fruits of his toil? Big, fat books have been written on politics and the art of government, on economics and how the nation's wealth should be distributed. Learned professors lecture on these subjects. But, while people talk and discuss, those who work suffer. Two hundred years ago a famous Frenchman, Voltaire, said of politicians and the like that 'they have discovered in their fine politics the art of causing those to die of hunger who, cultivating the earth, give the means of life to others.'

[1] From *Glimpses of World History* , p. 34.

8

Two Mosques[1]

The Shahidganj Masjid of Lahore is daily in the news these days.[2] There is quite an excitement in the city and religious fervour seems dominant on both sides. Attacks on each other, complaints of evil designs of the other and, in between, British rule showing its might as the judge. I do not have an accurate version of the incidents—who started it, who was at fault etc.—and I have no real intention of finding out. Such kinds of religious enthusiasm do not interest me much. But unfortunately, once it is aroused, you have to face it, interest or no interest. I was thinking how backward we are in this country, that we are prepared to sacrifice our lives for such trivial matters and are ready to endure slavery and hunger.

From this mosque my attention wandered to another mosque. It is a very famous historical mosque and for the last fourteen hundred years or so, crores of eyes have seen it. It is older than even Islam and in this long life it has witnessed many things. Many empires toppled before it, old kingdoms were destroyed and many religious changes took place. In silence it witnessed all and at every change and revolution changed its dress too. Fourteen hundred years of storm this majestic building faced; the rains washed it, the air scrubbed it with its particles and the dust covered some of its parts. Every stone speaks out its age and magnificence and it seems as if fifteen hundred years have injected the history of the world into its veins and capillaries. It was difficult to stand the tricks and storms of nature for such a long period, but more difficult than this was to endure the crimes and brutality of man. This also, however, it sustained. Before the still eyes of its stones, empires came up and dwindled, religions spread and collapsed, mighty emperors, beautiful women and many talented persons came into existence, lived and then disappeared. It witnessed bravery, baseness and meanness. Big and small, good and bad, all have gone; but those stones still stand. While looking down from their heights even now,

[1] Almora District Jail, 7 August, 1935. JN Papers, NMML. Original in Hindi.

[2] A dispute between Muslims and Sikhs over possession of lands attached to the Masjid was settled in favour of the Sikhs by the High Court on 19 October 1934. On acquiring possession of the land the Sikhs decided to renovate the building and the Muslims thereupon started an agitation.

I wonder what those stones think of the multitude below—the games of the children, the quarrels, the deceit and the foolishness of the elders—how very little have they learned these thousand years! How much more would it take them to learn and be wise?

A narrow arm of the sea, like a broad river, separates Europe from Asia there. The Bosphorus flows and keeps the two worlds separate. On the hillsides of its European bank there was an old settlement of Byzantium. For long it was part of the Roman Empire, the eastern border of which, up to the early centuries of the Christian era, was in Iraq. But from the eastern side this kingdom was often attacked. The power of Rome was declining and it was not able to protect its far-off borders properly. Sometimes from the west and north, the German barbarians (as the Romans called them) would overrun it and it was a problem to push them back. Sometimes from the East, from Iraq or the Arab side, the Asians would attack and defeat the Roman armies.

The Roman Emperor, Constantine, decided to shift his capital to the East, so as to protect the empire from the eastern onslaught. He selected the picturesque bank of the Bosphorus, and on the tiny hills of Byzantium established a huge city. When Constantinople (or Kustuntunia) came into being, the fourth century of the Christian era was coming to an end. The Roman Empire no doubt became well established in the East; but now the western border became more remote. After some time the Roman Empire got divided into two parts—the Western Empire and the Eastern Empire. Some years later the Western Empire was destroyed by its enemies. But the Eastern Empire lasted for over one thousand years thereafter and was known as the Byzantine Empire.

The Emperor Constantine not merely changed the capital but brought about yet another change. He accepted Christianity. Earlier the Christians in Rome were greatly tortured. Anyone of them who did not worship the Roman gods or the statue of the emperor could be done to death. They were often thrown before the hungry lions in the arena. It was a favourite sport of the Romans. It was very dangerous to be a Christian in Rome. They were considered as rebels. Now suddenly the situation changed greatly. The emperor himself embraced Christianity and Christianity now became the most honoured religion. Those who worshipped the old gods were now in great difficulty and were tortured by the authorities. Later, only one emperor (Julian)[3] gave up Christianity and again became the worshipper of the old gods but by now Christianity was well established and the old gods of Rome and Greece had to take shelter in the jungles from where also they gradually disappeared.

In this city of Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, massive buildings were built by the orders of the emperors and very soon it developed into a very big city. No other city in Europe could stand comparison

[3] (AD 331–63); emperor from AD 361–3. He granted freedom of worship to non-Christians and reorganized their priesthood.

with it—even Rome fell far behind. The buildings were erected in a new style—an architecture where the arches, domes, towers and pillars had a style of their own minute mosaic work on the pillars and towers. This architectural style is known as Byzantine art. In the sixth century a magnificent cathedral was built in this style. It was known as Sankta Sophia or Santa Sophia. It was the most massive church of the Eastern Roman Empire and the emperors desired that it should, by its high quality of art, be unique and suited to the empire. Their desires were fulfilled and even today it is considered the greatest achievement of this Byzantine art.

Later on the Christian religion split into two parts. In fact, there were many divisions but two were major. Rome and Constantinople were engaged in religious wars and became separated from each other. The Bishop of Rome (the most senior) became the Pope and in the western countries of Europe he was regarded as the head. But the Eastern Roman Empire did not recognize him and their Christian community became separate. It was known as the Orthodox Church or sometimes the Greek Church, for the language there had become Greek. The Orthodox Church held sway also in Russia and the nearby regions.

The Cathederal of Santa Sophia was the centre of the Greek Church and so it remained for nine hundred years. Once, in between, the Christians of Rome (who had come to fight the Muslims in the Crusades) attacked Constantinople and overpowered it, but they were soon turned out.

At last, when the Eastern Roman Empire had lasted for more than a thousand years, Santa Sophia also being about nine hundred years old, a new invasion took place which ended that old regime. In the fifteenth century the Osmanli Turks[4] conquered Constantinople and the greatest cathedral there now became the chief mosque. Santa Sophia was named Apa Suphea. In this new form it lasted for hundreds of years. That splendid mosque in a way became a landmark gazed at from long distances with aspirations. In the nineteenth century the Turkish Empire was weakening and Russia gaining ground. Russia was a very big country but a closed one and all over her empire there was not one warm-water port. She therefore cast a covetous eye on Constantinople. More than this was the spiritual and cultural attraction. The czars of Russia used to consider themselves successors to the Eastern Roman emperors and wanted to bring their old capital under their domination. Both were of the same religion, the Orthodox Greek Church, of which the centre was the famous Santa Sophia. For long it had been a mosque. How could that be tolerated? The Greek cross instead of the Islamic mark, *hilal* or the crescent, should be on its dome.

Gradually the Russia of the czars started expanding towards Constantinople. When she came nearer, the other powers of Europe were puzzled. England and France put obstacles, a war ensued and Russia stopped her advance for a while.

[4] Ancient name of the Turks of the Ottoman Empire.

But again, soon after, the same activity and political manoeuvres began. At last the Great War of 1914 started and in that, England, France, Russia and Italy made secret treaties.[5] Before the world were placed the high ideals of freedom and independence of small countries, but behind the curtain, like vultures waiting for the corpse, the partition of the world started.

This wish also remained unfulfilled. Before that corpse could be reached the Russia of the czars itself came to an end; a revolution took place there which changed the government as well as the social structure. To expose the cunning of the major imperialistic powers of Europe, the Bolsheviks annulled all the secret treaties and declared that they were against imperialism[6] and did not wish to annex any other country. All had a right to live in freedom.

The victorious powers of the West did not like this clear stand and sane attitude of the Bolsheviks. In their opinion, to bring to light the secret pacts was not a sign of civility. But even if the new regime in Russia was wicked, where was the sense in losing such a prized plunder? They, specially the English, took over Constantinople. After a lapse of fourteen hundred and sixty-six years the administration of this old city again changed hands from Muslims to Christians. The Sultan-Caliph was there all right, but he was just a tool to be used at will. Apa Suphea was there too, intact and in the shape of a mosque; but that glamour of freedom, with the Sultans going for prayers, was no longer there.

The Sultan bowed, the Caliph accepted European sovereignty; but a handful of Turks refused to accept it. One of them was Mustafa Kemal who preferred to revolt rather than to serve.

In the meantime there came up a new successor and claimant to Constantinople. These were the Greeks. After the War, Greece was awarded vast lands and started dreaming of her old Eastern Roman Empire. Till now Russia had been in the way, and also naturally Turkey. Now Russia was no longer in competition and the Turks were defeated and deflated. The passage looked open. Influential persons of England and France had been brought round too. There was therefore no apparent hitch.

But there was the great difficulty, the difficulty of Mustafa Kemal Pasha. He faced the Greek onslaught and ruthlessly drove out the Greek army from his country. He abolished the institutions of the Sultanate and Caliphate. He raised his prostrate and lifeless country, ravaged by a multitude of problems and enemies, and gave it fresh vigour. His greatest reforms were, however, in the religious and social fields. He pulled the women out of the veil and gave them a leading position in society. He crushed bigotry in religion never to raise its

[5] The alliance recognized their spheres of interest.

[6] On 8 November 1917, a day after they assumed power, the Bolsheviks issued a peace decree which proposed an immediate opening of negotiations for a just peace and declared the abolition of secret diplomacy.

head again. He propagated modern education for all. He put an end to customs and rituals of a thousand years.

From the old capital, Constantinople, he took away its status. For the last fifteen hundred years it had been the capital. Now Ankara, in Asia, became the capital—a small town, but an emblem of the new Turkish power. The name of Constantinople was also changed. It became Istanbul.

And Apa Suphea—what was its fate? Looking on at the ups and downs of life, that old building of fourteen hundred years stands still in Istanbul. For nine hundred years, it witnessed Greek services and smelt all the incense used in Greek worship. Then for four hundred and eighty years, it heard the *azam* in Arabic and lines of devotees for *namaz* stood on its floor stones.

And now?

One day, in this year 1935, only a few months back, by the orders of Gazi Mustafa Kemal (who has been now given a special title of Ataturk) the Apa Suphea mosque was no more a masjid. Quietly the *hojas*, *mullahs*, etc., were replaced and sent to other mosques. Now it has been decided that instead of being a mosque, Suphea be converted into a museum—specially that of the Byzantine period—an era of Christians before the arrival of the Turks. With the Turkish occupation of Istanbul or Constantinople in AD 1452, it is understood, the Byzantine art ended. Thus Sophea, now, in a way, went back again to the Christian era—and that on the orders of Kemal.

Great excavations are going on there these days, the mounds of earth are being removed and old mosaics being seen again. Work is going on under the supervision of experts of Byzantine art who have been called from America and Germany.

On the gate is the signboard of the museum and the gate-keeper in his seat. Hand him over your umbrella and stick, take your ticket and have a view inside of the samples of this well-known ancient art. And while going round, think of the peculiar history of this world and let your mind roam thousands of years back and onwards. Strange are the pictures, the spectacles, the tortures and terrors that one comes across. Ask those walls to relate to you their story, and narrate their experiences to you. Maybe the study of yesterday and today will enable you to remove the curtain and peep into the future.

But those stones and walls are silent. They had seen a lot of *jumma namaz* and Sunday services. A daily exhibition is now their lot. The world keeps changing, but they stay. On their worn-out faces is an apparent smirk and a mellow voice as if whispering: how ignorant and foolish is this human creature who does not learn by his thousands of years of experience and repeats the same follies.

9

Providence and Human Failing[1]

During my tour in the earthquake areas, or just before going there, I read with a great shock Gandhiji's statement to the effect that the earthquake had been a punishment for the sin of untouchability. This was a staggering remark and I welcomed and wholly agreed with Rabindranath Tagore's answer to it. Anything more opposed to the scientific outlook it would be difficult to imagine. Perhaps even science will not be absolutely dogmatic today about the effect of emotional states and psychic occurrences on matter. A mental shock may result in indigestion or something worse to the person concerned. But to suggest that a human custom or failing had its reactions on the movement of the earth's crust is an astounding thing. The idea of sin and divine wrath and man's relative importance in the affairs of the universe—they take us back a few hundred years, when the Inquisition flourished in Europe and burned Giordano Bruno for his scientific heresy and sent many a witch to the stake! Even in the eighteenth century in America leading Boston divines attributed earthquakes in Massachusetts to the impiety of lightning rods.

And if the earthquake was a divine punishment for sin, how are we to discover for which sin we are being punished?—for, alas! we have many sins to atone for. Each person can have his pet explanation; we may have been punished for submitting to alien domination, or for putting up with an unjust social system. The Maharaja of Durbhanga, the owner of enormous estates, was, financially, one of the major sufferers from the earthquake. We might as well say that this was a judgement on the zamindari system. That would be nearer the mark than to suggest that the more or less innocent people of Behar were being made to suffer vicariously for the sins of untouchability of the people of south India. Why did not the earthquake visit the land of untouchability itself? Or the British Government might call the calamity a divine punishment for civil disobedience, for, as a matter of fact, North Behar, which suffered most from the earthquake, took a leading part in the freedom movement.

We can go on speculating indefinitely in this manner. And then, of course, the question arises why we should interfere with the workings of Providence or try to lessen the effect of its divine decrees by our humane efforts. And we begin

[1] From *An Autobiography*, pp. 490–1.

to wonder why Providence has played this cruel joke on us: to make us full of imperfections, to surround us with snares and pitfalls, to create a miserable and cruel world, to make the tiger and the lamb, and then to punish us.

> When the stars threw down their spears
> And water'd heaven with their tears,
> Dare he laugh his work to see?
> Dare he who made the lamb make thee?

10

Prison Humours[1]

I mused over the relations of Englishmen and Indians, of ruler and ruled, of official and non-official, of those in authority and those who have to obey. What a great gulf divided the two races, and how they distrusted and disliked each other. But more than the distrust and the dislike was the ignorance of each other, and, because of this, each side was a little afraid of the other and was constantly on its guard in the other's presence. To each, the other appeared as a sour-looking, unamiable creature, and neither realized that there was decency and kindliness behind the mask. As the rulers of the land, with enormous patronage at their command, the English had attracted to themselves crowds of cringing place-hunters and opportunists, and they judged of India from these unsavoury specimens. The Indian saw the Englishman function only as an official with all the inhumanity of the machine and with all the passion of a vested interest trying to preserve itself. How different was the behaviour of a person acting as an individual and obeying his own impulses from his behaviour as an official or a unit in an army. The soldier, stiffening to attention, drops his humanity, and, acting as an automaton, shoots and kills inoffensive and harmless persons who have done him no ill. So also, I thought, the police officer who would hesitate to do an unkindness to an individual would, the day after, direct a lathi charge on innocent people. He would not think of himself as an individual then, nor will he consider as individuals those crowds whom he beats down or shoots.

As soon as one begins to think of the other side as a mass or a crowd, the human link seems to go. We forget that crowds also consist of individuals, of men and women and children, who love and hate and suffer. An average Englishman, if he was frank, would probably confess that he knows some quite decent Indians, but they are exceptions, and as a whole Indians are a detestable crowd. The average Indian would admit that some Englishmen whom he knows were admirable, but, apart from these few, the English were an overbearing, brutal, and thoroughly bad lot. Curious how each person judges of the other race, not from the individual with whom he has come in contact, but from others about whom he knows very little or nothing at all.

[1] From *An Autobiography*, pp. 346–7.

Personally, I have been very fortunate and, almost invariably, I have received courtesy from my own countrymen as well as from the English. Even my gaolers and the policemen, who have arrested me or escorted me as a prisoner from place to place, have been kind to me, and much of the bitterness of conflict and the sting of gaol life has been toned down because of this human touch. It was not surprising that my own countrymen should treat me so, for I had gained a measure of notoriety and popularity among them. Even for Englishmen I was an individual and not merely one of the mass, and, I imagine, the fact that I had received my education in England, and especially my having been to an English public school, brought me nearer to them. Because of this, they could not help considering me as more or less civilized after their own pattern, however perverted my public activities appeared to be. Often I felt a little embarrassed and humiliated because of this special treatment when I compared my lot with that of most of my colleagues.

11

Morale and Nerve[1]

One feature of these early months pained me greatly. This was the hauling down of our National Flag by various municipalities and public bodies, and especially by the Calcutta Corporation which was said to have a majority of Congress members. The flag was taken down under pressure from the police and the Government, which threatened severe action in case of non-compliance. This action would have probably meant a suspension of the municipality or punishment of its members. Organizations with vested interests are apt to be timid, and perhaps it was inevitable that they should act as they did, but nevertheless it hurt. That flag had become a symbol to us of much that we held dear, and under its shadow we had taken many a pledge to protect its honour. To pull it down with our hands, or to have it pulled down at our behest, seemed not only a breaking of that pledge but almost a sacrilege. It was a submission of the spirit, a denial of the truth in one; an affirmation, in the face of superior physical might, of the false. And those who submitted in this way lowered the morale of the nation, and injured its self-respect.

It was not that they were expected to behave as heroes, and rush into the fire. It was wrong and absurd to blame anyone for not being in the front rank and courting prison, or other suffering or loss. Each one had many duties and responsibilities to shoulder, and no one else had a right to sit in judgement on him. But to sit or work in the background is one thing; to deny the truth, or what one conceives to be the truth, is a more serious matter. It was open to members of municipalities, when called upon to do anything against the national interest, to resign from their seats. As a rule they preferred to remain in those seats.

> But bees, on flowers alighting, cease their hum—
> So, settling upon places, Whigs grow dumb!"

Perhaps it is unjust to criticize anyone for his behaviour during a sudden crisis which threatens to overwhelm him. The nerve of the bravest fails them sometimes. In the great *Titanic* disaster of 1912, famous people, who could never have been associated with cowardice, escaped by bribing the crew, leaving

[1] From *An Autobiography*, pp. 333–4.

others to drown. Very recently the fire on the *Morro Castle* revealed a shameful state of affairs. No one knows how he will behave in a similar crisis when the primeval instincts overpower reason and restraint. So we may not blame. But that should not prevent us from noting that falling away from right conduct, and from taking care in future that the steering-wheel of the ship of the nation is not put in hands that tremble and fail when the need is greatest. Worse still is the attempt to justify this failure and call it right conduct. That, surely, is a greater offence than the failure itself.

All struggles between rival forces depend greatly on morale and nerve. Even the bloodiest war depends upon them: "In the final event battles are won by nerves," said Marshal Foch. Much more so are nerve and morale necessary in a non-violent struggle, and anyone who, by his conduct, impairs that morale and shakes the nation's nerve, does a serious disservice to the cause.

12

Shirshasana[1]

Among my exercises one pleased me particularly—the *shīrshasāna*, standing on the head with the palms of the hands, fingers interlocked, supporting the back of the head, elbows on the floor, body vertical, upside down. I suppose physically this exercise is very good: I liked it even more for its psychological effect on me. The slightly comic position increased my good humour and made me a little more tolerant of life's vagaries.

My usual good health and the bodily sense of well-being have been of very great help to me in getting over periods of depression, which are inevitable in prison life. They have helped me also in accommodating myself to changing conditions in prison or outside. I have had many shocks, which at the time seemed to bowl me over, but to my own surprise I have recovered sooner than I expected. I suppose a test of my fundamental sobriety and sanity is the fact that I hardly know what a bad headache is, nor have I ever been troubled with insomnia. I have escaped these common diseases of civilization, as also bad eyesight, in spite of excessive use of the eyes for reading and writing, sometimes in a bad light in gaol. An eye specialist expressed his amazement last year at my good eyesight. Eight years before he had prophesied that I would have to take to spectacles in another year or two. He was very much mistaken, and I am still carrying on successfully without them. Although these facts might establish my reputation for sobriety and sanity, I might add that I have a horror of people who are inescapably and unchangingly sane and sober.

[1] From *An Autobiography*, 1936, p. 397.

13

Indian Marriage[1]

Indian marriages, both among the rich and the poor, have had their full share of condemnation as wasteful and extravagant display. They deserve all this. Even apart from the waste, it is most painful to see the vulgar display which has no artistic or aesthetic value of any kind. (Needless to say there are exceptions.) For all this the really guilty people are the middle classes. The poor are also extravagant, even at the cost of burdensome debts, but it is the height of absurdity to say, as some people do, that their poverty is due to their social customs. It is often forgotten that the life of the poor is terribly dull and monotonous, and an occasional marriage celebration, bringing with it some feasting and singing, comes to them as an oasis in a desert of soulless toil, a refuge from domesticity and the prosaic business of life. Who would be cruel enough to deny this consolation to them, who have such few occasions for laughter? Stop waste by all means, lessen the extravagance (big and foolish words to use for the little show that the poor put up in their poverty!), but do not make their life more drab and cheerless than it is.

So also for the middle classes. Waste and extravagance apart, these marriages are big social reunions where distant relations and old friends meet after long intervals. India is a big country and it is not easy for friends to meet, and for many to meet together at the same time is still more difficult. Hence the popularity of the marriage celebrations. The only rival to them, and it has already excelled them in many ways even as a social reunion, is the political gathering, the various conferences, or the Congress!

[1] From *An Autobiography*, pp. 9–10.

14

Examinations[1]

In train to Wardha
29 June 1929

Darling,

My thoughts go to you today especially and I think of the burden of your examination. It will begin today and you will have your seven hours of it, and again tomorrow and the day after. I remember reading somewhere what a famous professor of the Sorbonne said once during the middle ages. He compared examinations to the sufferings in purgatory and came to the conclusion that the former were far worse. Not knowing much about purgatory I cannot say but I am sure that examinations are a nuisance. All that can be said for them is that they do push us on a little and bring some tension in our minds and thus help in making them sharp and clear. But there is too much of this tension and sometimes this results in blurring and confusing our minds instead of clearing them. Especially so in India, where far too much importance is attached to the passing of examinations and failure is considered a terrible disgrace. As a matter of fact, examinations as they are conducted today are no real test of anything worthwhile. Often those who do well in examinations are failures subsequently in life, and vice versa: So it is absurd to take them too seriously or to grow enthusiastic or depressed over them. We try to succeed of course in whatever we put our hands and minds to but we must not lose our sense of proportion.

Your loving
Papu

[1] To Indira Nehru, Indira Gandhi Papers, NMML. Excerpts.

15

Trade Unions[1]

What is the worker? What strength has the poor worker got? He can be knocked down; he can be kicked and cuffed and dealt with in any way that an employer might choose. One worker, or one peasant has no strength. But if they organize themselves, they will have great strength. A ten thousand, a hundred thousands and a million workers, organized, will have great strength. Therefore, strength lies, for you, in organization. It does not lie in begging and pleading for justice and mercy. It lies in organization and in your helping each other whenever you are in trouble. This is the whole history of the workers' movement in the world and this has taught us that the only way for workers to protect their interests and to save themselves is to organize into trade unions and to stand shoulder to shoulder whenever there is attack on any single person. I hope that you have learnt that lesson.

You must also learn another lesson. Employers of course always try to break trade unions. They try to weaken them because they are afraid of a strong aggressive trade union movement. Therefore they put difficulties in the way. They try to start rival trade unions which are really no trade unions at all, which they try to induce the workers to join so that real trade unions might suffer. You should beware of the unions started by employers. Their purpose is not to strengthen the workers' movement, but to weaken and destroy it. Their purpose is, when workers go on a strike, to break that strike. Their purpose is to supply blacklegs when there is a crisis in the labour movement. Therefore, workers must always remember this and support and strengthen the real trade unions.

[1] Speech at Madras. *The Hindu*, 8 October 1936. JN Papers, NMML. Excerpts.

16

Temples[1]

Somewhere in Tamil Nadu (my geography is not
strong enough to remember these odd names)
15 October 1936

Darling Indu,

Today I was at Madura and I made a point of going to the famous temple here. It was a private visit. Hardly anyone was told of it. But lo and behold, a great crowd surrounded the temple and followed me into its vast corridors. A strange way to see a place with a mass of seething humanity! My ideas of the temple are consequently vague. But the vast size was impressive and sometimes oppressive. The corridors were enormous, and huge statuary, some of which very good. I was taken to the inner sanctum, the holy of holies, the shrine of Meenakshi, an incarnation of Parvati. A great honour. I was struck by the curious way of the Hindu faith which refuses to part with any born within its fold. Here I am accused of irreligion and yet treated as one who is a devout follower. A present of a silk scarf was also given to me—a special gift of the goddess. I realized in this vast temple with its innumerable corridors and inner chambers, faintly lighted up, the great psychological influence of these religious edifices. How they must impress and rather frighten the multitudes and increase the power of the priesthood. That temple put me in mind of the days when the priests were triumphant and ruled over the minds of men, of the great temples of Egypt and Mesopotamia, and, to some extent, of the great cathedrals. There are not many people who can resist this numbing effect.

Your loving
Papu

[1] Written *en route* from Madurai to Tiruchchirappalli. Indira Gandhi Papers, NMML. Excerpts.

17

The Functions of a Municipality[1]

I go about in the country like a pilgrim who seldom rests anywhere. I wander about in quest of something which is not entirely clear in my view, the freedom of India. That is clear enough. I wander about and address huge crowds trying to carry the message of the Congress to them. Sometimes doubts assail me whether I reach the mind of the people, but still I carry on, not because I have a passion for discomfort or a passion for self-sacrifice but because of the unease which is in my mind. It is my mind that troubles me. The sights that I see around me during my wanderings, the sights of misery and unhappiness, trouble me. So it becomes difficult for me to rest even though I may seek that rest. You know we have to carry on till we reach our goal. And often I feel a certain measure of dissatisfaction at the inactive character of much of the work that we do, of the destructive character of our work. And I envy you who are in charge of the great city and who are doing a great deal of constructive work for the city. It is an enviable work.

After all, it is the city which is a fine sphere of culture and civilization. I want to take the cultural advantages of the city. I like to take many of the cultural advantages that the city life provides and I like some of the things which the village stands for. I like the city to approach the village and the village to approach the city. So I like this idea of trying to look after great cities, trying to raise their level, of making them beautiful cities, not only with beautiful buildings, but with healthy, efficient human beings, or loving people, cooperating with each other and not trying to knock each other down and exploit each other and make each other miserable. That is the ideal of the great city that I should like to have and I like to work for. I love to extend this beauty to the village. I love to have the city beautiful, the country beautiful, the world beautiful, so that our people in future might have a glimpse of a world where they will have cooperation, a sense of service for the common good, goodwill and love for each other and not violence, hatred, exploitation and misery.

I go to a great city and find great palatial buildings there, I always form my opinion of the city not from the palaces, but I form my opinion of the city from things that are happening behind these palaces—the mud-huts in which are

[1] Address at the Calcutta Corporation, 9 November 1936, SWJN, Vol. 7, pp. 545–53.

living thousands of people, living in misery and unhappiness, missing education, sanitation, hygiene, cultural development, parks, libraries and so many other things for which the municipality is set up. This is undoubtedly the look-out of the municipality. An efficient municipality is also ultimately responsible for the housing of the population. A municipality is also responsible for their maintenance and if there is no work for the people to do, it is its duty to provide them with employment.

A poor man, a starving man, is a disgrace to a municipality. It is not good for the municipality to say that we have no money to do this or to do that. I think it is the essential function of a municipality to see that there is no unemployment. If you cannot fulfil this function, it must be understood that something is wrong either in the municipality or in the social structure under which it functions.

18

Back Home[1]

It is good to come back home after six weeks of continuous wandering, good to see familiar sights, familiar faces, to rest for more than a day or two in the same place. Some have the wanderlust, and I have it myself in some measure, and I love to get out of the old rut and cross mountains and seas and make acquaintance with new countries, new people. And when one may not do this, as alas too often I may not, I give rein to my imagination and we take long and improbable journeys and seek adventure in distant countries. But the old rut calls us back and we return to the day's routine.

So I was back from Burma and Malaya. There were numerous formidable files awaiting me, and a crowd of letters to answer, and questions and problems which a great organization has continually to face. Pressmen surrounded me—what had I to say to this or that? Had I seen some statement or other? Was the Congress going to form ministries? And so on interminably. Fortunately I knew little about these various statements and pronouncements and I felt some difficulty in readjusting myself to the old world which I had left but six weeks before. Before my eyes floated still the Shwe Dagon pagoda glistening in the morning sunlight, and the palm trees swaying in the pleasant land of Malaya.

Back to the files and the letters. A summer school has been raided[2] and the lathi has felled down many people. The jute strike is over but the grievances of the jute workers continue.[3] The workers in a match factory of the Swedish trust have been long on strike and are being ill-treated.[4] The problem of the detenus. A Congress committee has been suspended and protests and counter-protests have poured in. Appeals from district committees against certain orders of their

[1] Allahabad, 19 June 1937. *The Modern Review*. July 1937. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 197–202.

[2] The Madras government put a ban on the summer school at Kottapatam and subsequently lathi charged the students. For Jawaharlal's statement of 17 June 1937 see SWJN, Vol. 8, pp. 249–50.

[3] The Calcutta Jute mill workers struck work in February 1937 demanding their right to form a Union.

[4] Reference is to the Dhubai Match factory in Assam who were on strike since December 1936 and the Ambernath Match factory near Bombay. Both belonged to a Swedish Match Trust. See SWJN, Vol. 8, p. 257.

provincial committees. There is an interruption and fifty kisans appear on the scene full of their troubles. They cannot be ignored.

Back again to the files. Should kisan organizations be started or should we concentrate on making kisans members of Congress committees? What should be the relation between the Congress committee and the kisan sabha? Am I in favour of functional representation? Telegrams pour in protesting against the choice of a candidate to contest a bye-election. A long distance trunk call on the telephone comes from south India. Visitors, visitors with nothing worthwhile to say, wasting time. An occasional visitor, who is interesting, taking up more time. And all the while the Shwe Dagon pagoda floating in the air and the gem palace of Mandalay and laughing men and women in gay attire wandering by.

Back to work. Financial matters, confusing and troublesome. Cases of disciplinary action. Some hard ones but discipline has to be maintained in an organization. Mass contacts, what progress is being made in the villages? What with Muslims in towns and villages? Letters in approval of our new activities, letters in criticism. Are the Congress members of the legislatures working in their constituencies carrying the message of the Congress?

How hot it is, and the paper one writes on sticks to the hand. And how pleasant it was by the seaside in Malaya with the tide lapping the beach and the palm trees and the graceful arecanuts fringing the shore.

A conference with colleagues in the office. Cablegrams from abroad. Discussion on foreign affairs. Zanzibar—Indians overseas. Visitors, visitors—hell! Why will so many people come when there is so much to be done? But some are old colleagues and though what they say may be unimportant, they are valued comrades and may not be ignored. Strangers come and who knows whether their business is important or not? Peasants come and who can turn these helpless ones away without a word of cheer?

The situation on the frontier—air-bombing and kidnappings, a curious mixture, and the larger question being somewhat hidden by communal feelings on either side. When will people behave like grown-ups? How childish all this is and religion, as of old, warps the mind and confuses the issue.

A note on Congress work in the Punjab, a complaint from Bombay which takes up time. Visitors asking me to visit their districts or attend conferences.

Will the Congress accept ministries? When will the Working Committee meet to consider this question? Wise people, knowing far more than I do, announce that the Committee is meeting within a few days. Evidently they imagine that our main preoccupation is to think about and discuss this question of ministries. They would be surprised to find how little this has to do with our work and how many other activities claim our attention. And those who question may be still further surprised if they had a glimpse into my mind.

For my mind goes back over the heads of the visitors and questioners and across the files to those six weeks that are gone past recall, days full of wandering

in strange places, old world and new, crowded days. And pictures of the past come up before me when the beautiful palace at Mandalay hummed with play and laughter, and behind this hid many an intrigue and cruelty, and the rapid decay of an order that had lived its time. That gem palace is empty today, shorn of its gems, and only ghosts and memories fill its deserted halls. The teak roofs and pillars stand as of old, but they are dead wood and no more. The past they represent is gone for ever.

But the Shwe Dagon pagoda still towers in all its strength and beauty over the city of Rangoon and gives its ageless message to all who come under its spell. It shines in the morning sunlight and glimmers as the evening shadows fall, and we creep away from Burma reverently with this image of the soul of a people impressed on our minds and hearts.

19

Prison Reforms[1]

We of the outer world are apt to feel very virtuous and superior when we see these people beyond the pale, and we preach to them and point out to them the error of their ways, and seldom think that our virtue is largely due to circumstances and chances, and their fall from grace is due to pressure of economic forces or lack of education and training or a bad environment.

The fundamental fact about crime is that it is largely the outcome of a bad social order and the fault lies chiefly with society and little if at all with the individual who sins. Jail conditions may be improved and should be improved, but the real improvement that is needed is an improvement of the social order which exploits and starves and thus drives a man to crime.

Most of us who have spent some time in Indian prisons have met many a fine man there condemned for life or ten years or more to prison. It is amazing how many 'lifers' one comes across. Most of these, with a little help and training, would develop into fine citizens. The impression I have gathered from my contacts with the prison population has been that a large portion of it is very far from being of the criminal type. But society, as it is today, recks little of the good or bad and makes both of them suffer for its own failings.

Raghubir Sahai has not touched upon this fundamental aspect of crime and prison life, but has laid stress on some of the more obvious features. Even this is welcome for it leads people to think of the subject and out of this consideration and discussion something good may emerge. Many of the reforms he has urged I agree with. They will lighten the heavy burden of many a man who was my fellow prisoner and whom I grew to like and appreciate, and a touch of much-needed humanity will enter the portals of the jail. Some of his suggestions I do not appreciate greatly. One of these is that the condemned prisoners' cells may be converted into a picture gallery of the apostles and avatars, and that other prisoners should be ceaselessly reminded of the error of their ways, and the strait and narrow path of virtue should ever be pointed out to them. I have no objection to the picture gallery as such but, if I happened to be a prisoner again, I doubt if I would fancy too much moralizing or preaching. The strait and narrow path is not so difficult if one is well fed and has a motor-car to help one to glide along it. But with an empty stomach and the world against you, it becomes hard and slippery.

[1] Foreword to *Life in an Indian Jail* by Raghubir Sahai (1937).

20

In the Surma Valley[1]

As I journeyed from one valley to another, the railway crept along (for it went very slowly) between thick forests on either side; almost impenetrable, so they seemed. They came right up to the railway line, leaving only a narrow passage grudgingly for us to pass through. Their million eyes seemed to look down with disdain on this human effort, and were full of the hostility of the forest against man, who had dared so much against it, and cleared it to enlarge his domain. Their thousand mouths were agape with the desire to swallow him and his works.

The call of the jungle and the mountain has always been strong within me, a dweller of cities and of plains though I am, and I gazed at these forests and jungles, fascinated, and wondered what myriad forms of life and what tragedy they hid in their darknesses. Bountiful nature, or nature red in tooth and claw—was it much worse in these forest recesses than in the cities and the dwelling-places of men and women? A wild animal kills for food to satisfy his hunger. He does not kill for sport or for the pleasure of killing. The fierce fights of the jungle are individual fights, not the mass murder that man calls war; there is no wholesale destruction by bomb and poison gas. The comparison seemed to be all in favour of the forest and the wild animals.

So I thought as I watched the passing jungles. Gatherings of people at small stations, and many tribal folk with gracious gifts of fruit and flowers and cloth, woven by themselves, and fresh milk came to welcome me. Bright-eyed Naga children gave me garlands to wear. Some of these tribal people pressed some money on me also, copper and nickel coins for Congress work, they said. And I felt ashamed and humbled before their clear gaze, full of faith and affection. What of the cities with their selfishness and intrigues and money-grabbing?

[1] 9 December 1937. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 21 December 1937. Reprinted in *The Unity of India* , pp. 184–8. Excerpts.

21

Bharat Mata[1]

I have seen a number of Ravi Varma's[2] pictures which depict *Bharat Mata* as an elegant and well-fed lady holding in her numerous arms the symbols of wealth, power, etc. I wonder whether it is this image of *Bharat Mata* that those who drank the toast to India had in their minds. For my part, the India that I invariably visualize is a totally different *Bharat Mata*. It is not the aristocratic and opulent India of the wealthy classes, but the India of the village, the peasant and his struggling family. That is the real India, and it is mere romanticism to think of our country in any other terms. Some of you present may be rather uncomfortable at the general trend of my remarks. Certainly, the India that I see is very different from the India I am addressing—well-dressed and in many cases well-to-do business and professional men, dressed in the most correct western evening dresses. Although most Indians prefer to give these functions as much an air of informality as possible, there are some who have so completely adopted the routine dress and gestures of upper class European social functions that, I suppose, they find it difficult even for one evening to discard their trappings, and recreate, in so far as conditions permit, the feeling and atmosphere of an Indian social gathering.

[1] Speech at Diwali Dinner organized by the Indian Community, London, 29 October 1938. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 10 November 1938. Excerpts.

[2] (1848–1906); well–known painter from Travancore of portraits and scenes from the Indian epics.

22

Federation[1]

I

One of the tragedies of history is the slowness with which people's minds adapt themselves to a changing environment. The world changes from day-to-day, not so our minds which are peculiarly static and insist on imagining that today is the same as yesterday and tomorrow will not differ greatly. This lag between our minds and reality prevents us from solving the problems of the day and produces war and revolution and much else that afflicts the world. . . .

The old political and economic structure is rotten and moth-eaten and all the king's horses and all the king's men cannot hold it together for long. We discuss the problem of the States as if it was a question of bargaining or give and take between the rulers and the people, with the paramount power taking a share of the spoils. But the States simply cannot fit in the modern world and no amount of argument or soft words can change that fundamental fact. It is on the basis of this fact, that they are out-worn, decadent systems, which should have been decently buried long ago, that all consideration must proceed. Systems like individuals have their span of life and they cannot go beyond it.

The land system again is intimately connected, or should be connected, with a modern economy. If it is not so connected it must inevitably decay, as it has done. The problem is a scientific, impersonal one and has little to do with our love for the zamindar or the tenant. It is patent that our land system is a drag on the development of the nation and impedes our progress; such systems in other countries have given place to others. So it must inevitably go here also. Objection is taken to various measures of land reform brought forward by Congress governments, and those who object do not realize where their objections lead to. These tenancy bills do not radically change the basis of the land system and all they purport to do is to give much-needed relief to the peasant. They do not solve the land problem. I should like the bills to become law because the peasants hunger for relief. But I shall not be sorry if obstruction stops them for then the issue will be clear and the final solution nearer.

This applies to every problem we have to face; we tinker about with it, hoping to ease the situation for a while. But the problem remains.

[1] Allahabad, 27 May 1939. Article printed in the *National Herald*, 31 May–1 June 1939. Excerpts.

I had sat down to write about federation but my mind has strayed and led me into other directions. But the issue in every case is the same and we have to consider the question of federation from this wider and more essential standpoint—to fit the political and economic structure of India to reality in our country and the world.

It surprises me that people should talk still of federation in terms of possibility. Even these who oppose it vehemently do so obviously because they think that it might be imposed upon us. My own mind shut the door to federation long ago, not only because I disliked it but because I came to the conclusion that under present circumstances it could not come. Let me explain. I am not a prophet and, in the changing world today, it needs a very brave or a very foolish man to say what will happen. Anything may happen in India and it is a possibility that we might go to pieces and have to submit to something even worse than federation. It is not impossible that the world may be dominated for a while by fascism and all freedom crushed. We have seen that Mr. Neville Chamberlain's government is capable of every species of folly and betrayal and, so far as they are concerned, we can only expect the worst from them.

And yet I do not think that federation as proposed, or any variant of it, can come to India. People talk about it but the idea is as dead as the dodo. It is quite possible that Lord Zetland and our other preceptors have not quite realized this or, realizing it, do not wish to say so. Federation cannot come to India in this shape and form because India has changed and the world has changed completely, and the age of the Round Table conferences is lost already in the dim mists of antiquity. If British folly seeks still to impose it upon us, it will mean deadly conflict and the break-up of much that we have in India today. The ultimate result may be good or bad for us, but it will not be the functioning of federation.

And so I think that federation cannot come. It is dead and there is no magic potion that will give it life.

II

The question of federation has been considered by us almost entirely in terms of a conflict between Indian nationalism and desire for independence from British imperialism. That is obviously an important aspect.

But there can be a resurrection of the idea that the League enshrined, not in the limited, twisted and perverse way that took shape in Paris and Geneva, but fuller, more powerful and organic and based on collective peace, freedom and democracy. On no other basis can it seek rebirth or find sustenance.

A world union is necessary today. Unhappily, it will not come because those in authority are children of the old world which has ceased to be and cannot think or act in terms of the new. It will not come before the world is

shattered again by war and millions have perished. But it will come because there is no other way out. Such a union can have nothing to do with imperialism or fascism and must be based on the fullest democracy and freedom, each nation having autonomy within its borders, and submitting in international matters to the union legislature to which it sends its representatives. Inevitably it will have to work under a planned and socialized economy in order to end the conflicts of today.

To such a federal union India would gladly belong and contribute to her utmost for the peace progress of the world. The India which belongs to it will also have her own federation, but it will be a federation very different from that misshapen and ill-begotten thing that is thrust upon us by Britain. To this we shall give no quarter.

23

The Monsoon Comes to Bombay[1]

I like Bombay. There is space. The sea and the cool breezes that blow in from the sea temper the heat. The harbour twinkles with many lights and the Back Bay, though it has lost its old sweep and graceful curve, is still attractive, and at night the long rows of lights make it singularly pleasing to the sight. I do not particularly fancy the new buildings that are growing up with such rapidity, and yet a distant view of these monotonous and rather dull structures is pleasing enough.

I like Bombay for the warmth of friendship that I find there. Because of this a visit to Bombay is always something I look forward to. But Bombay has lost some of its flavour, and a film of sadness covers it, since a year ago a dear friend passed away.[2]

Yet much as I like Bombay, I weary of it after a few days and want to get away. Used to the cold and heat of the north, accommodating myself to the cold wind as well as the scorching *loo*, I find this intermediate weather, which changes little, an enervating experience. It seems so static, so moderate, that my changing moods do not fit in with it.

I have been to Bombay so many times but I had never seen the coming of the monsoon here. I had been told and I had read that this coming of the first rains was an event in Bombay; they came with pomp and circumstance and overwhelmed the city with their lavish gift. It rains hard in most parts of India during the monsoon and we all know this. But it was different in Bombay, they said; there was a ferocity in this sudden first meeting of the rain-laden clouds with land. The dry land was lashed by the pouring torrents and converted into a temporary sea. Bombay was not static then; it became elemental, dynamic, changing.

So I looked forward to the coming of the monsoon and I became a watcher of the skies, waiting to spot the heralds that preceded the attack. A few showers came. Oh, that was nothing, I was told, the monsoon has yet to come. Heavier rains followed but I ignored them and waited for some extraordinary happening.

[1] Bombay, 15 June 1939. Article printed in the *National Herald*, 18 June 1939. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 211–12.

[2] Jal Naoroji.

While I waited, I learnt from various people that the monsoon had definitely come and established itself. Where was the pomp and circumstance, and the glory of the attack, and the combat between cloud and land, and the surging and lashing sea? Like a thief in the night, the monsoon had come to Bombay, as well it might have done in Allahabad or elsewhere. Another illusion gone.

24

Flying During the Monsoon[1]

I have done a fair amount of flying in India, both in the north and in the south. But this was my first experience of flying during the monsoon and I saw a new and pleasing sight. Ordinarily the countryside looks dry and parched and the eye gets tired by the monotony of the landscape. Not so during the monsoon. We all know how the monsoon brings welcome rain to the parched earth, and the pleasant smell of fresh rain-water on the dry land, and the greenery that blossoms at that magic touch. But to see this from on high brought home this change more vividly. Everything was green, though there were many shades to that greenery, and abundant water often flooded the fields. The trees stood out, cool and clean-looking and even the little villages that dotted the landscape lost some of their drab appearance. The eye rested and lingered over this sight and did not get tired. India seemed to be a green and pleasant land, rich in beauty and the wealth of its soil.

We flew low, usually about five or six hundred feet and the land rushed past us. Above us were the clouds and we had to keep under them in order to avoid blind flying. And because we flew low we saw the landscape in some detail and observed men and women working in the fields, and cattle straying lazily on the pasture grounds. We could take in that picture from that height, and while seeing a wide expanse of earth, yet be near enough to be of it. Sometimes a hill would approach us, and we would just go over it and leave it far behind. Sometimes rain poured down on us and battered on the glass screen. We did not worry much about it. Nor did we really mind air pockets which made us jump. But when the clouds and mists began to envelop us, flying low as we were, then my pilot was a little worried. When we reached Bamrauli it was raining hard and a mist covered the aerodrome, so that it was difficult to distinguish it.

I had wanted to start early in the morning from Jamshedpur and reach Lucknow in the forenoon at the latest. But reports of thunderstorms and high winds were not encouraging and my pilot, an expert at his job, was in no mood

[1] 5 August 1939. *National Herald*, 13 August 1939. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, pp. 213–15.

to take risks. We postponed our departure till a better report came and eventually took off a little before noon. We flew fast with a following wind pushing us on. Towns and villages passed us, and the river Sone and the Ganga with Benares in the distance. It had been good flying so far with only occasional bumps. As we approached Allahabad black and threatening clouds came nearer and nearer and it was obvious that we were going into a big thunderstorm. Out of these clouds suddenly appeared an Imperial Airways flying-boat a little to our right and sailed majestically by. It was big enough to go through that storm but our small plane was beginning to be buffeted.

Our pilot decided in favour of discretion and turned back to Benares. We landed there on the military aerodrome. After some waiting, which we utilized in filling up with petrol, we decided to venture up again. But the ground did not have much of a runway and our plane felt heavy. So I dropped my luggage in Benares and parted also with Upadhyaya who had been accompanying me. Thus lightened we flew easily enough and headed for Allahabad. As we approached the city the low-lying clouds enveloped us and rain lessened the visibility still further. We crossed the Ganga and my eyes spotted Anand Bhawan and Swaraj Bhawan and many other familiar landmarks. Even the Alfred Park looked singularly attractive from above, perhaps because of the monsoon. We flew right over the High Court flying low and I could see large numbers of the men of the law crowding in the verandahs to see this impertinent little plane rush by.

And so to Bamrauli in just half an hour from Benares. There was little chance of our going further by air that day and I bade goodbye to our pilot and the gallant little plane that had brought us, and decided, regretfully, to continue my journey to Lucknow by the slow-moving railway train.

The big airlines usually fly high. The K.L.M. has taken me 18,000 feet above sea-level and flown over the snow-covered Alps. We flew so high even over the Dead Sea in Palestine that frost covered our windowpanes. Once I had a curious experience in an Imperial Airways liner flying over the deserts of Sind. This was my first experience of long-distance flying. It was early morning and the dawn was stealing over the earth. I saw stretched out far below me a magnificent snowfield. There it was stretching as far as I could see on every side of us, a glistening uniform mass of snow. I rubbed my eyes in amazement and looked again. There could be no mistaking it. But it was absurd to have snow in Sind. Was it cotton wool then, masses of it strewn on the ground? That was an equally fantastic notion. We were flying high and the sky above us was clear and blue. Below us also for some thousands of feet there was no cloud and then there was this white shining mass apparently covering the ground. The mystery was solved soon enough when we came down about five thousand feet and lost ourselves in the clouds. We emerged out of them and under them, and found we were still flying nearly ten thousand feet above the ground.

Flying high, one loses touch with the earth. It seems distant, apart from us and very few details are visible. A big river may be a silver streak but even a mountain, unless it is very high, is hardly distinguishable from the low-lying land. There is little sense of speed as one gets in a car or a railway train with objects rushing past us. But if a plane flies really low, under a hundred feet, then the earth simply rushes up and away.

25

The Big Machine[1]

Anand Bhawan,
Allahabad, 29 September 1939

My dear Krishna,

I am personally a believer in the development of large-scale industries. Nevertheless I have wholeheartedly supported the khadi movement as well as the wider village industries movement for political, social and economic reasons. In my mind there was no essential conflict between the two, although there might occasionally be conflict in regard to certain aspects of development of both. In this matter I do not represent Gandhiji's viewpoint to any large extent, but in practice so far there has not been any marked conflict between the two viewpoints.

It seems to me obvious that certain key and vital industries, defence industries, and public utilities must be on a large scale. There are certain others which may be on a large or a small scale or a cottage scale. A difference of opinion might arise in regard to the latter. Behind that difference there is a difference of outlook and philosophy. . . . Violence and monopoly and concentration of wealth in a few hands are produced by the present economic structure. It is not large-scale industry that brings any injustice and violence but the misuse of large-scale industry by private capitalists and financiers. It is true that the big machine multiplies the power of man exceedingly both for construction and destruction, both for good for ill. It is possible, I think, to eliminate the evil use and the violence of the big machine by changing the economic structure of capitalism. It is essentially private ownership and the acquisitive form of society that encourage a competitive violence. Under a socialist society this evil should go, at the same time leaving us the good which the big machine has brought.

It is true, I think, that there are certain inherent dangers in big industry and the big machine. There is a tendency to concentrate power and I am not quite sure that this can be wholly eliminated. But I cannot conceive of the world or of any progressive country doing away with the big machine. Even if this were possible, this would result in lowering production tremendously and in thus

[1] To Krishna Kripalani, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, pp. 381–5. Excerpts.

reducing standards of life greatly. For a country to try to do away with industrialization would lead to that country falling a prey, economically and otherwise, to other more industrialized countries, which would exploit it. For the development of cottage industries on a widespread scale, it is obvious that political and economic power is necessary. It is unlikely that a country entirely devoted to cottage industries will ever get this political or economic power, and so in effect it will not even be able to push cottage industries as it wants to.

I feel, therefore, that it is inevitable and desirable to encourage the use and development of the big machine and thus to industrialize India. I am convinced at the same time that no amount of industrialization in this way will do away with the necessity of developing cottage industries on a large scale in India, and this not merely as feeders but as independent units. I do not know what science may achieve in the course of the next generation or two but as far as I can see cottage industries will be essential for India in addition to large-scale industries, which should be encouraged in every way. The problem, therefore, becomes one of coordination between the two. It is a question of planning by the state. It cannot be successfully tackled under the present anarchic capitalist system satisfactorily.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

26

Famine[1]

Famine came, ghastly, staggering, horrible beyond words. In Malabar, in Bijapur, in Orissa, and, above all, in the rich and fertile province of Bengal, men and women and little children died in their thousands daily for lack of food. They dropped down dead before the palaces of Calcutta, their corpses lay in the mud-huts of Bengal's innumerable villages and covered the roads and fields of its rural areas. Men were dying all over the world and killing each other in battle; usually a quick death, often a brave death, death for a cause, death with a purpose, death which seemed in this mad world of ours an inexorable logic of events, a sudden end to the life we could not mould or control. Death was common enough everywhere.

But here death had no purpose, no logic, no necessity; it was the result of man's incompetence and callousness, man-made, a slow creeping thing of horror with nothing to redeem it, life merging and fading into death, with death looking out of the shrunken eyes and withered frame while life still lingered for a while. And so it was not considered right or proper to mention it; it was not good form to talk or write of unsavoury topics. To do so was to 'dramatize' an unfortunate situation. False reports were issued by those in authority in India and in England. But corpses cannot easily be overlooked; they come in the way.

While the fires of hell were consuming the people of Bengal and elsewhere, we were first told by high authority that owing to wartime prosperity the peasantry in many parts of India had too much to eat. Then it was said that the fault lay with provincial autonomy, and that the British Government in India, or the India Office in London, sticklers for constitutional propriety, could not interfere with provincial affairs. That constitution was suspended, violated, ignored, or changed daily by hundreds of decrees and ordinances issued by the Viceroy under his sole and unlimited authority. That constitution meant ultimately the unchecked authoritarian rule of a single individual who was responsible to no one in India, and who had greater power than any dictator anywhere in the world. That constitution was worked by the permanent services, chiefly the Indian Civil Service and the police, who were mainly responsible to the Governor, who was the agent of the Viceroy, and who could well

[1] From *The Discovery of India*, pp. 16–17.

ignore the ministers when such existed. The ministers, good or bad, lived on sufferance and dared not disobey the orders from above or even interfere with the discretion of the services supposed to be subordinate to them.

Something was done at last. Some relief was given. But a million had died, or two millions, or three; no one knows how many starved to death or died of disease during those months of horror. No one knows of the many millions of emaciated boys and girls and little children who just escaped death then, but are stunted and broken in body and spirit. And still the fear of widespread famine and disease hovers over the land.

President Roosevelt's Four Freedoms. The Freedom from Want. Yet rich England, and richer America, paid little heed to the hunger of the body that was killing millions in India, as they had paid little heed to the fiery thirst of the spirit that is consuming the people of India. Money was not needed it was said, and ships to carry food were scarce owing to wartime requirements. But in spite of governmental obstruction and desire to minimize the overwhelming tragedy of Bengal, sensitive and warm-hearted men and women in England and America and elsewhere came to our help. Above all, the Governments of China and Eire, poor in their own resources, full of their own difficulties, yet having had bitter experience themselves of famine and misery and sensing what ailed the body and spirit of India, gave generous help. India has a long memory, but whatever else she remembers or forgets, she will not forget these gracious and friendly acts.

27

Freedom of the Press[1]

Allahabad, 4 March 1940

Dear Friend,

I am a strong believer in the freedom of the press and consider that the fullest latitude should be given to it to express opinions and criticize policies. This of course does not mean that any newspaper or individual should indulge in malicious attacks on anyone, or should indulge in the low type of journalism which has been a feature of some of our communal organs. But it is my firm belief that public life should be built up on the foundation of a free and independent press. I therefore regret greatly the attempt to boycott the *Jugantar*.

I should like to add that the recent order of the Bengal Government on *The Hindustan Standard* to submit all editorial matter for censorship before publication, seems to me an amazing misuse of official authority. If this kind of thing is to be permitted, there will be a complete end of independent editorial writing in newspapers. Their leading articles will not be theirs, but the censor's, and nobody wants to read what the censor thinks about a particular matter. A government has every right to express its own opinion and to place it before the public directly as coming from it. But the indirect way of giving publicity to its own opinions through the editorial columns of newspapers, or of suppressing criticisms of its own actions, is something that has always been considered vitally wrong to the working of a newspaper. It is far better for a newspaper not to have any editorial matter than to submit to this degradation or surrender of its soul. I am glad that *The Hindustan Standard* preferred this course and stopped giving editorial matter. Every journalist and newspaper man in India, as well as every person who is interested in the vital question of having a free press, must condemn the action taken by the Bengal Government in this matter.

I understand that the Bengal Government has also tried to suppress newspapers by asking securities from them. . . .

Famous nationalist newspapers which have established their position are, to a large extent, able to look after themselves. Anything that happens to them

[1] To Tushar Kanti Ghosh. JN Papers, NMML. Published in *The Hindustan Times,* 12 March 1940. Excerpts.

draws public attention and public support. Smaller and less known papers often have to suffer from government interference because they are not so well-known. It is dangerous, however, to allow even the smallest and the weakest of our journals to fall a victim to official interference and suppression. For this habit grows with use and gradually the public mind gets accustomed to the misuse of its powers by the government. Therefore it is necessary for the Journalist Association, as well as for all newspapers, not to allow even such cases relating to the lesser known papers to go by default. If they are at all anxious to retain the liberty of the press, they must be vigilant guardians of this liberty and must resist every encroachment from wherever it might come. This is not a matter of political views or opinions. The moment we acquiesce in an attack on a newspaper with which we happen to disagree, we have surrendered in principle, and when the attack comes on us we have no power left to resist it.

The freedom of the press does not consist in our permitting such things as we like to appear. Even a tyrant is agreeable to this type of freedom. Civil liberty and freedom of the press consist in our permitting what we do not like, in our putting up with criticisms of ourselves, in our allowing public expression of views which seem to us even to be injurious to our cause itself. For it is always a dangerous thing to seek a temporary advantage at the cost of the larger good or of the final objective. If we set wrong standards and adopt wrong means, even in the belief that we are furthering a right cause, that cause itself will be affected and prejudiced by those standards and those means. The end in view will itself be governed partly by these standards and means and may ultimately become something entirely different from what we had envisaged.

If our aim is democracy and freedom, then we must keep that in view always in our work and our activities. If this work and activity is carried on in a way which is opposed to democracy and freedom, then surely the end will not be democracy and freedom but something different.

It is true that it is easy to lay down high principles which are logical and which sound well. It is more difficult to put them into practice. For life is not very logical and the standard of human behaviour is not as high as we should like it to be. We live in a jungle where, often enough, predatory individuals and nations roam about at will and seek to injure society. Crises arise, like wars or struggles for national freedom, or class struggles which upset the normal course of events. It becomes very difficult then to adhere, in their entirety, to the high principles we lay down which presume a certain standard of human behaviour. During these crises or revolutionary times, it becomes necessary to reconsider, to some extent, the ordinary freedom of the individual or the group. Even so, it is a dangerous thing and likely to have bad consequences unless the greatest vigilance is exercised. Otherwise we succumb to the very evil we fight against.

When we talk of democracy and freedom as well as of civil liberties, we must always remember that they involve responsibility and discipline. Without

discipline and responsibility in the individual or group, there is likely to be no true freedom. In the change-over from a state of subjection and denial of liberties to a free state, a certain tendency towards licence is perhaps inevitable. This is regrettable but it is not difficult to understand, for it is the reaction from long-continued suppression. To some extent this should be tolerated, for to suppress it is to emphasize the very complex that produces it. Nevertheless we have all to be on our guard to prevent freedom from degenerating into licence and irresponsibility and indiscipline.

In India we have a magnificent record of tolerance. No country in the world, excepting China, has this record. While Europe and other countries were deluged in blood in wars of religion and in the attempt to suppress this opinion or that, India and China, with the assurance of millennia of culture behind them, opened their doors wide to ideas and religions from abroad. This tremendous background of toleration and culture is a precious inheritance for us.

Today passions are roused on other issues which affect us vitally. It is right that we should feel deeply about these issues, for on their outcome depends the future of our country and of the world. It is right that we should put all our strength in the advancement of the cause that we hold dear. But it is not right that we should give up or tone down the very principles which have been the glory of Indian civilization in the past and which are, in a somewhat different sense, the foundations of democratic freedom. Above all we should try to combine freedom and civil liberty with discipline and responsibility.

As this letter of mine to you may be of interest to newspapers and the public, I would suggest to you to issue it to the press for publication.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

28

Ganga[1]

Allahabad, 7 April 1940

Dear Edward,

Your idea of making a film on the Ganga is fascinating. . . .

As the Ganga is history, the historical aspect should be brought out. The Ganga is intimately linked up with tradition, mythology, art, culture and history. You find her cropping up elsewhere. To deal with the subject adequately would be a tremendous task but in any event the history and traditional aspect cannot be neglected. The superstitious side need not be stressed. Still, in order to understand Indian mythology and art, the mythological origins of the Ganga might be referred to, that is, Ganga falling on the matted head of Shiva, the matted head apparently representing the Himalaya mountains. This, I suppose, could best be done by reproducing some of the well-known sculptures depicting it. There are many such.

Then certain famous historical scenes ought to be shown, for instance, the coming of the Aryans and their reaching the Ganga for the first time and their joy at seeing this majestic river. There are two famous lines of Sir Mohammad Iqbal in his song: *Sare Jahan se Achchha, Hindostan Hamara.*[2] These refer to the coming of the Aryans. It would be worthwhile bringing in these lines into the picture. These are:

Ai ab-e-rod-e Ganga wah din hai yad tujh ko
Utara tere kinare jab karavan hamara.[3]

In these days of Pakistan agitation, it is interesting to note what one of the leaders of the Muslim League said about this.

Then there are so many battles that have taken place round about the Ganga. The Greek invasion during the time of Chandra Gupta Maurya was stopped somewhere near the Ganga, possibly not far from Allahabad. It would

[1] To Edward Thompson. *A Bunch of Old Letters*, pp. 428–31. Excerpts.

[2] 'My country, this Hindustan, is the best in the world.'

[3] 'Oh! Waters of Ganga, do you remember the day when our caravans landed by your banks.'

be an excellent picture to show life in Chandra Gupta's time. Kannauj was a great city then, famous for its wares and especially its swords and steel weapons. References to Kannauj swords occur in accounts of Sohrab and Rustam, as well as, I think, in the *Shahnama*[4] describing Alexander's invasion.

Earlier than this the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* stories can be woven in. Later Ashoka's period with his great capital, Pataliputra, on the Ganga.

Indian literature is full of the Ganga and you find her name mentioned in songs in Burma and Indo-China and elsewhere. In Harsha's time the Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen Tsang, describes the *Kumbha Mela* at Allahabad, which was even then an ancient festival. There are of course innumerable historical incidents that can be dealt with. The Gangetic valley, and more particularly the *Doaba*, that is the area between the Ganga and the Jamuna, that very beautiful and gracious river, you get the whole of the Krishna legend round about Muttra and Brindavan and of the sweet songs in Braj Bhasha.

It is difficult to suggest a definite time for this survey. During winter the Ganga shrinks and is not much to look at in many places. The rainy season would be the proper time. But the big *melas* take place mostly during the winter. The biggest of them is the Allahabad *Kumbha* which takes place once in 12 years. You are fortunate that this *Kumbha* is taking place next year in January and February.

I do not know if you can reach Gangotri, the source of the Ganga. It is a difficult journey and may take you a fortnight from the railhead. Most of this journey will have to be done on horseback, as there are no cart roads. Possibly you might reduce it to a week if you ride hard. I have not been there myself, but two years ago, I followed the Ganga in the Garhwal mountains for a considerable distance and later flew to Badrinath by plane and saw the Ganga from the skies.

Hardwar and the neighbourhood, where the Ganga emerges from the hills, is of course important. . . .

I hope you will not use the name 'Ganges'. I dislike it. 'Ganga' sounds infinitely better. I wonder how our forebears managed to change this good name into Ganges. A friend has suggested an explanation which sounds feasible. Ganges, he says, is a corruption of Gangaji. . . .

Yours,
Jawaharlal

[4] A Persian epic by Firdausi.

29

Writers and the War[1]

I send my greetings and good wishes to the Third Conference of the Indian Progressive Writers' Association. Seldom, if ever, was it more necessary for people to think correctly and understand world conditions as well as the different forces struggling for mastery, as it is today. Effective action cannot come out of a vacuum; it must grow out of clear thinking. Unless that clear thinking is there to govern our actions, all our energy and enthusiasm may well run waste. It is obvious that it must be the special duty of the thinkers and writers of today to give a lead to others in regard to clear thinking.

Nothing surprises me so much as the lack of even an attempt to think clearly in the world today. Of course many individuals make this attempt and meet with some success but those in authority in most countries seem to be singularly unaware of the vast changes that are taking place and that are bound to take place. They talk vaguely in terms of a new order but they act as if all they desired was a slight reorientation of the old order which has been found wanting and which is dying before our eyes.

We are told that the first thing to be done is to win the War; all else will follow it. True, the progressive forces of the world must triumph in the War. But there is no greater folly than to think of this War as a purely military spectacle, although the military aspect is necessarily important.

Fascism is bad; no argument is needed to prove that it is the enemy of human freedom and progress. Imperialism is bad, as all of us know, not merely in theory but in practice. We want to be rid of both. Yet I feel that we are far too apt to forget that the mighty phenomena that we are seeing today all over the world are too big to be confined in a few words and phrases. We are apt to miss their significance if we make our minds prisoners of these phrases or slogans, correct as they might be in their limited spheres. Elemental things are happening and human earthquakes are taking place bringing an old world to ruin. Vast destruction is a painful thing to contemplate, and yet out of its womb the building up of something worthwhile might well take place. It should be the function of writers to endeavour to view this picture as a whole, not to lose

[1] Kulu, 16 May 1942. *The Hindu*, 22 May 1942. This message was sent to the Third Conference of the Indian Progressive Writers' Association held in New Delhi on 19–20 May 1942.

themselves in the passion and prejudices of the moment, to see the objective shining clearly in front of them, and to try to harness action for the achievement of this goal.

This War has demonstrated afresh that in every country nationalism is still the most powerful urge. This fact can never be forgotten and it can only be ignored at our peril. But to those who think clearly, nationalism by itself is a narrow creed and leads to no solution. It must be tagged on to internationalism and to a correct appreciation of world happenings. But that internationalism will fail of its purpose unless it is rooted deeply in that irrepressible urge of the people in every country, that is called nationalism. In a subject country like India this importance of nationalism and the hunger for freedom is even more important. It is for writers to balance these two urges, that of nationalism and that of internationalism, and thus to evolve a resultant force which derives strength from the nationalist sentiments of the people and is in harmony with the international objectives of today.

India stands today on the edge of a sharp sword; on the one side is an imperialism which she detests and which she will on no account tolerate, on the other side is an advancing fascism full of peril to her and to the world. It is a difficult position, but it is clear that she cannot and must not submit in thought or action to this fascist invasion. Ultimately she must rely on her own strength, for there is no hope for those who rely on others.

30

A Sense of Values[1]

Dear Betty,

Normally each individual's attitude to life is that of his social group or the more intimate circle in which he or she moves. That lays down the standard to be aimed at with minor variations. When there is revolutionary change in the air, we are affected by it, we talk of it, and yet that talk has little reality behind it, and we find it difficult to pull ourselves out of accustomed ways of life and thought. Sometimes we are compelled to do so by circumstances and we submit, as we must, but unwillingly and rather ungraciously. We become then the slaves of circumstance rather than its masters or even its equals. To a large extent we are all such slaves of happenings which are beyond our individual control. Yet there is a difference.

Every parent wants his or her child to have all the virtues, all the good fortune. But we can seldom, if ever, have all of everything. We have to choose or to emphasize some aspects rather than others. There are what are loosely called the masculine virtues and those that are termed the feminine virtues. Both good and desirable and yet just slightly inconsistent with each other. In India, the feminine virtues seem to be more obvious today at any rate, though of course the masculine virtues are present also. Our outlook seems to favour the former.

Then again much depends on the period we are living in. In a more or less static period, certain virtues and accomplishments are more useful: in a rapidly changing period other virtues and capacities assume importance. But whatever the period, self-reliance, fitness of body and keenness of mind and a harmony between the two, and a certain basic sense of values are always desirable. If this foundation is provided to the growing child much has already been done.

Yours,
Jawahar

[1] To Krishna Hutheesing, 11 April 1944, JN Collection, NMML. Excerpts.

31

Death[1]

Dear Betty,

Other letters have also come to me, from Nan[2] and Indu, giving me particulars of Ranjit's last days.[3]

It is three weeks now since he died and during this period my mind has been trying to adjust itself to the fact that he is no more. That is not easily done, and yet sometimes I feel that ages have passed since he died. But adjustment has inevitably to be made. Living in isolation, and not having seen him for a year and a half, the whole conception becomes of the mind and imagination.

Every death upsets the equilibrium not only of various individuals but of the group or groups of family and friends. There is a gap. That gap remains and yet nature establishes a new equilibrium.

Yours,
Jawahar

[1] To Krishna Hutheesing, 5 February 1944. JN Collection, NMML. Excerpts.

[2] Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Jawaharlal Nehru's sister. Ambassador, Soviet Union 1947–9; United States 1949–51. High Commissioner, Britain 1954–61.

[3] Ranjit Pandit.

32

Birth[1]

Dear Betty,

The birth of a new member of the family always makes one feel reminiscent and remember one's childhood days and other births. . . . It is an unending panorama of human life with its sweetness and bitterness, its ups and downs. One would think that with all this age-long experience and personal and racial memories, nothing very novel can be expected. The old cycle repeats itself again and again. And yet whenever a person arrives, it is something absolutely new, like others and still unique in its own way. Nature goes on repeating itself but there is no end to its infinite variety and every spring is a resurrection, every new birth a new beginning. Especially when that new birth is intimately connected with us, it becomes a revival of ourselves and our old hopes centre round it.

Yours,
Jawahar

[1] To Krishna Hutheesing, 29 August 1944, JN Collection, NMML. Excerpts.

33

On Coming out of Jail[1]

I am coming out of jail after 1,041 days. During this period I have been cut off from the outside world, which is now bewildering to both the eye and the mind. You will be surprised to hear that till this moment I do not know what Lord Wavell has said in his broadcast last night. But even if I know its contents it is unfair to expect me to comment on it so soon.

My first thoughts on coming out of prison are with those who are still rotting in prison.[2] My colleagues and myself had been completely cut off from them so long as we were in Ahmadnagar. That is why we welcomed the idea of repatriation to our provinces. My long journey from Ahmadnagar to Bareilly, with a halt at Naini Central Prison on the way, enabled me to meet some of the old comrades and catch a few glimpses of what they have suffered and what the province has gone through during the last three gruesome years.

Against this grim background of suffering and humiliation it is not a matter for any rejoicing that eight members of the Congress Working Committee have come strutting out of prison. It is a matter for shame and sorrow that so many of our comrades are still behind prison walls. Their sufferings, unlike mine, have not hit the headlines. The world tends to forget them. That is why I want to pay homage to those unknown Congress soldiers, who have borne the brunt of the struggle.

My anguished thoughts also go to the hunted men who are being chased from pillar to post. Recently, there has been a case in Almora court in which an Englishwoman[3] was punished organizing humanitarian relief for the

[1] Speech at Almora at a reception given soon after his release, 15 June 1945. Based on reports from *The Leader*, 17 June and *The Hindustan Times*, 17 June 1945. SWJN, Vol. 14, pp. 1–2.

[2] When the Viceroy announced on 14 June 1945 the release of the members of the Congress Working Committee, he left those who were still in jail in consequence of the 1942 disturbances, to the consideration of the new Central Government and provincial governments. According to official sources 6,127 people were in detention as on 1 September 1945.

[3] C.M. Heilmann, also known as Sarla Devi, came to India in January 1932 and worked in various educational institutions. She was living in a Gandhi ashram in Almora district in 1942. For helping the families of certain absconders, she was jailed for one year in 1944.

distressed families of these men. I gave up legal practice long ago, so I cannot pronounce a court judgement on the case. But there are certain things which are bigger than law. One of them is the law of human sympathy. If any law prevents me from doing my human duty to the poor and the distressed, then I say, to hell with this law and its makers. If any of you are frightened by this law from doing this duty, then I say, to hell with you. If the British think that by keeping us in jail for three years they have broken our spirit, they are sadly mistaken. I say again they are sadly mistaken.

I am not concerned with what these men have done. Whatever they have done, it is a savage thing to seek to make their families suffer for their wrongs. There are all sorts of savages. There are savages who do not admit they are savages. There are those who make brazen-faced admission of their savagery,.and those who are enforcing or promulgating this savagery also fall in the latter category. It shows to what depths of human degradation they have fallen. It also shows to what they owe their position in this country.

I do not fully know what has happened during the last three years. But I have heard a little about it and have felt and thought about it. There are certain things I do not like and certain other things I do like. I am not prepared to give you this story at this moment, nor am I going to sit in judgement on its dramatis personae, but I am prepared to say this that those who acted for the love of their country, however much they may have erred, will always have a place in my heart. They will always have shelter in my house. They are welcome to Anand Bhawan.

I pay my homage to those who are paying with their lives and those who are now at the door of death. Among them, it is only in the fitness of things that I must take the name of one of India's brave women, Aruna Asaf Ali. If my voice can reach her, I want to send her my love and esteem. I want to tell her that whatever she has done shall not be wasted and will bear fruit. It will leave its impression on her countrymen.

In the revolutionary world in which we are living it will not help to lie in fear or to swerve to the other extreme of boasting and bullying. You must have yourselves seen during the last three years that our national struggle needed a new kind of technique than mere shouting of slogans and spectacular processions. I hope that after the experience of these gruesome years, more wisdom and more iron have entered India's soul.

34

Note on Defence[1]

The Indian army, as is well known and recognized throughout the world, consists of a very fine body of men of whom any country can be proud. That is a great asset for us and we should preserve this asset and not allow, it to deteriorate in any way. It would be a great pity if communal feelings spread in the Indian army because these would inevitably lead to a weakening of the structure as well as a deterioration in morale. Our policy must therefore be aimed at keeping the army away from such communal feelings as far as possible. While we have necessarily to pay attention to fair representation in the army of the different communities in India, it should be made perfectly clear that the ultimate criteria are merit and capacity. It is now I think well recognized that we should give up the idea of some people of India belonging to martial races and therefore being particularly suited for the army, and others belonging to non-martial races. This distinction must disappear and we must deal with the whole of India on the same basis.

I have mentioned above the necessity for making the army feel that it is a national army of India. This means that a deliberate attempt should be made to make them feel so and to make them realize that their service and their allegiance is primarily due to their own country. They must be made to feel proud of their country and to believe in its great future. They must realize that it is their onerous and honourable duty to guard this country from aggression and foreign intrusion so that the country may develop rapidly and take its proper place in the world.

While it is therefore necessary to infuse a new nationalist spirit in the ranks of the Indian army, it is equally necessary to make the Indian public feel that the army is theirs and is not some kind of hostile force imposed on them. They should be proud of their army and it should be an honour for any Indian to belong to that army. Fortunately some change has been visible in the attitude of the Indian public generally towards the Indian army. This should be encouraged in every way. Thus the Indian army and the public generally will come

[1] Note to Defence Secretary, 12 September 1946, and sent to Auchinleck, Commander-in-Chief. Auchinleck Papers, John Rylands University Library, Manchester. SWJN, Vol. 3 (II series), pp. 488–92. Excerpts.

closer to each other and the barriers which have divided them in the past will disappear. The army as such of course should remain apart from politics.

It we are to develop, as we must, a national army in India (and army of course includes here navy and air force) that army must be manned by Indian nationals from top to bottom. A national army has no place for non-nationals except as experts and advisers. Generally speaking this policy has been accepted but the process of change has been remarkably slow. This has to be speeded up and in future where foreign help is necessary this should be as far as possible in the nature of expert and advisory help.

The army carries out the policy of the Government. During the past that policy has been largely controlled from London. In future the foreign policy of India and of course the domestic policy also will be progressively an independent policy controlled by the Indian national Government. That policy will endeavour to cooperate wherever possible with British policy, but it may not be dictated to by British foreign policy. Its sole aim must be the good of India and of the Indian people and the maintenance of peace in India and abroad.

Unfortunately the army has to be used sometimes for quelling domestic disorders. All soldiers hate this kind of work. It is against their self-respect and is bad for the morale of the army. Nevertheless sometimes this becomes an essential duty of the army when disorders cannot be controlled by the police whose normal duty this is. It would be desirable, wherever necessary, to increase the police force or to form special peace preservation corps for this particular purpose so as to relieve the army as far as possible of this distasteful duty. . . .

When we talk of a national army in India it naturally follows that the British army in India should no longer remain here for any purpose, including Frontier defence. India must make her own arrangements for her defence and the British army has to leave India as rapidly as possible. This need not wait for the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly. It is recognized by all concerned, including the British Government, that we are all aiming at the independence of India. Independence with foreign troops on the soil of India would be a travesty and a farce. Therefore all foreign troops have to be withdrawn though a certain number of British officers may remain here by agreement for a period.

All questions of defence are today in a fluid state because of rapid developments in the science of warfare. It is quite conceivable that our present methods of warfare may become completely out of date within 10 years or so owing to scientific research. The coming of atomic energy and the possibility of our using cosmic forces are revolutionizing the whole conception of life as it is lived today and will have the most powerful effects on the whole structure of modern civilization. Those effects will be specially notable in regard to war. It may be that war itself may become an impossible way of handling human problems. However that may be, it is obvious that any effective war machine must have behind it a high stage of industrialization and scientific research, both extensive

and intensive. No country which is not industrialized can carry on war for long, however good the army might be. No country, which has not got its scientific research in all its forms and of the highest standing, can compete in industry or in war with another. This leads to the conclusion that scientific research must be organized on the broadest scale. . . .

In this note I have referred to many aspects of our army, army policy and foreign affairs. They touch each other. There are many other matters concerning the Indian army in which the Government is interested and in regard to which it desires changes. But I do not wish to burden this note any further. The immediate questions before us are a change in the whole outlook of the Indian army making it national in reality and more in accord with public sentiment, the withdrawal of the British forces from India, and the withdrawal of Indian troops from abroad, more specially from the Netherlands, East Indies and Iraq.

35

Time in Prison[1]

Time seems to change its nature in prison. The present hardly exists, for there is an absence of feeling and sensation which might separate it from the dead past. Even news of the active, living and dying world outside has a certain dream-like unreality, an immobility and an unchangeableness as of the past. The other objective time ceases to be, the inner and subjective sense remains, but at a lower level, except when thought pulls it out of the present and experiences a kind of reality in the past or in the future. We live, as Auguste Comte said, dead men's lives, encased in our pasts, but this is especially so in prison where we try to find some sustenance for our starved and locked-up emotions in memory of the past or fancies of the future.

There is a stillness and everlastingness about the past; it changes not and has a touch of eternity, like a painted picture or a statue in bronze or marble. Unaffected by the storms and upheavals of the present, it maintains its dignity and repose and tempts the troubled spirit and the tortured mind to seek shelter in its vaulted catacombs. There is peace there and security, and one may even sense a spiritual quality.

But it is not life, unless we can find the vital links between it and the present with all its conflicts and problems. It is a kind of art for art's sake, without the passion and the urge to action which are they very stuff of life. Without that passion and urge, there is a gradual oozing out of hope and vitality, a settling down on lower levels of existence, a slow merging into non-existence. We become prisoners of the past and some part of its immobility sticks to us.

This passage of the mind is all the easier in prison where action is denied and we become slaves to the routine of jail-life.

Yet the past is ever with us and all that we are and that we have comes from the past. We are its products and we live immersed in it. Not to understand it and feel it as something living within us is not to understand the present. To combine it with the present and extend it to the future, to break from it where it cannot be so united, to make of all this the pulsating and vibrating material for thought and action—that is life.

Any vital action springs from the depths of the being. All the long past of the individual and even of the race has prepared the background for that

[1] From *The Discovery of India*, pp. 20–1.

psychological moment of action. All the racial memories, influences of heredity and environment and training, subconscious urges, thoughts and dreams and action from infancy and childhood onwards, in their curious and tremendous mix-up, inevitably drive to that new action, which again becomes yet another factor influencing the future. Influencing the future, partly determining it, possibly even largely determining it, and yet, surely, it is not all determinism.

Aurobindo Ghose writes somewhere of the present as "the pure and virgin moment," that razor's edge of time and existence which divides the past from the future, and is, and yet, instantaneously is not. The phrase is attractive and yet what does it mean? The virgin moment emerging from the veil of the future in all its naked purity, coming into contact with us, and immediately becoming the soiled and stale past. It is we that soil it and violate it? Or is the moment not so virgin after all, for it is bound up with all the harlotry of the past?

Whether there is any such thing as human freedom in the philosophic sense or whether there is only an automatic determinism, I do not know. A very great deal appears certainly to be determined by the past complex of events which bear down and often overwhelm the individual. Possibly even the inner urge that he experiences, that apparent exercise of free will, is itself conditioned. As Schopenhauer says, "a man can do what he will, but not will as he will." A belief in an absolute determinism seems to me to lead inevitably to complete inaction, to death in life. All my sense of life rebels against it, though of course that very rebellion may itself have been conditioned by previous events.

36

English Clubs[1]

English clubs in India usually have territorial names—the Bengal Club, the Allahabad Club, etc. They are confined to Britishers, or rather to Europeans. There need be no objection to territorial designation, or even to a group of persons having a club for themselves and not approving of outsiders joining it. But designation is derived from the old British habit of considering that they are the real India that counts, the real Bengal, the real Allahabad. Others are just excrescences, useful in their own way if they know their places, but otherwise a nuisance. The exclusion of non-Europeans is far more a racial affair than a justifiable means for people with cultural affinities to meet together in their leisure moments for play and social intercourse, without the intrusion of other elements. For my part I have no objection to exclusive English or European clubs, and very few Indians would care to join them; but when this social exclusiveness is clearly based on racialism and on a ruling class always exhibiting its superiority and unapproachability, it bears another aspect. In Bombay there is a well-known club which did not allow and so far as I know, does not allow, an Indian (except as a servant) even in its visitors' room, even though he might be a ruling prince or a captain of industry.

Racialism in India is not so much English versus Indian; it is European as opposed to Asiatic. In India every European, be the German, or Pole, or Rumanian, is automatically a member of the ruling race. Railway carriages, station retiring-rooms, benches in parks, etc., are marked 'For Europeans Only.' This is bad enough in South Africa or elsewhere, but to have to put up with it in one's own country is a humiliating and exasperating reminder of one's enslaved condition.

It is true that a gradual change has been taking place in these external manifestations of racial superiority and imperial arrogance, but the process is slow and frequent instances occur to show how superficial it is. Political pressure and the rise of a militant nationalism enforce change and lead to a deliberate attempt to tone down the former racialism and aggressiveness; and yet that very political movement, when it reaches a stage of crisis and is sought to be crushed, leads to a resurgence of all the old imperialist and racial arrogance in its extremest form.

[1] From *The Discovery of India*, pp. 294–5.

The English are a sensitive people, and yet when they go to foreign countries there is a strange lack of awareness about them. In India, where the relation of ruler and ruled makes mutual understanding difficult, this lack of awareness is peculiarly evident. Almost one would think that it is deliberate, so that they may see only what they want to see and be blind to all else; but facts do not vanish because they are ignored, and when they compel attention there is a feeling of displeasure and resentment at the unexpected happening, as of some trick having been played.

In this land of caste the British, and more especially the Indian Civil Service, have built up a caste which is rigid and exclusive. Even the Indian members of the service do not really belong to that caste, though they wear the insignia and conform to its rules. That caste has developed something in the nature of a religious faith in its own paramount importance, and round that faith has grown an appropriate mythology which helps to maintain it. A combination of faith and vested interests is a powerful one, and any challenge to it arouses the deepest passions and fierce indignation.

37

The *INA*[1]

When we were in Ahmednagar Prison, we had heard vaguely about the formation of an Indian National Army in Malaya. We knew very little about it. Indeed very few people in India knew much about it at the time. Soon after our release from prison in June 1945, I had some further news and particulars about the formation of this Army. I was naturally interested, but the Japanese war was going on then and I did not think it proper to say anything in public about what I had heard. Soon after the Japanese war ended and I thought the time had come to make public reference to this army.

My knowledge even then was limited and I was not quite sure in my mind as to how far the formation and activities of this army had been justified, keeping in view the wider scheme of things and the implications of the world war. But I had no doubt in my mind even then of two facts—that the men and women, who had enrolled themselves in this army and worked under Shri Subhas Chandra Bose's guidance, had done so because of their passionate desire to serve the cause of India's freedom; also that if, owing to some technical interpretation of military law, large numbers of them received severe sentences, it would be a tragedy for India. It would be a tragedy not only because that might involve the death or long incarceration of brave and vital sons and daughters of India, but also because that would leave a deep wound in the body of India which would take very long to heal. That would mean also an intensification of the ill will against England which was great already. It might well be an insuparable barrier between the two countries.

So, quite apart from the political background, I was convinced that everything should be done to save these young men and women. I had judged rightly, for immediately there was an amazing reaction in the whole of India and even the remote villages suddenly knew about the I.N.A. and wanted to do something which might help in effecting the release of the men being tried or imprisoned. Those men, whatever they were as individuals, became symbols of India's struggle for freedom and because of this the people of India, with an amazing unanimity, stood by those symbols and sought to protect them. A

[1] New Delhi, 10 October 1946. Foreword *My Memories of I.N.A. and Its Netaji* by Shah Nawaj Khan (Delhi, 1946). SWJN, Vol. 1 (II series), pp. 352–4. Excerpts.

wave of excitement passed through the land and every other question, more vital in its larger significance, became secondary for the moment. The trial of some of these men conducted with great ability by Shri Bhulabhai Desai held the stage in India and Shri Bhulabhai's final address[2] became a classic.

Public memory is notoriously short and in any event the public mind could not function at that pitch for long. Nevertheless the I.N.A. made history not only in Malaya and Burma and elsewhere but also in people's minds all over India, and that fact will endure. When the passions of the day have cooled down a very objective estimate of the I.N.A. and its leaders and the work it did will be made.

[2] Presenting the defence arguments on 17 and 18 December 1945 before the General Court Martial trying three I.N.A. officers, Bhulabhai Desai had called for the status of belligerency to be accorded to the I.N.A., whose members "fought as a part of an organized army for the liberation of their country." He contended that the trial was illegal since the accused could not be tried under domestic law. He claimed that the officers held were entitled to be treated as prisoners of war and set free with the cessation of hostilities.

38

Civil Marriages[1]

Now, the subject of marriage reform is a subject which obviously interested every individual and it is easy to think of all these ramifications but it does confuse the issue. The subject before us is very simple. For my part, I am entirely in favour of some kind of general provision for civil marriages, and I hope soon this House will adopt some such measure. This measure does not go so far. It seeks to remedy, as far as I can see, certain lacunae, certain difficulties which have arisen, and all of us know that there are numerous marriages amongst Hindus today which may or may not be considered strictly legal. Some people may not attach much importance to legality, but other people do, and obviously whether they do or not, it does affect all manner of things—maybe in regard to subsequent inheritance and other matters—whether the marriage is legal or not. Now in order to avoid those difficulties, this proposal is made for a couple, who have been married according to certain religious rites and who may perhaps doubt the validity of their marriage, to go through the civil form to validate it. I may say at once that I do not approve of some of the provisions as suggested in Dr. Deshmukh's Bill, more especially right at the end where he talks about the dissolution of the marriage when the civil marriage takes place.[2] I do not see any reason why anything should be dissolved at all, but the general principle underlying this Bill is to enable people who may have contracted marriages, which are not strictly legal, to legalize them by civil marriage. I do not see how anybody can possibly object to that. It is a permissive clause; it does not compel anybody. People have talked about divorce and other matters.[3] Nobody in this particular Bill is changing the Hindu law in regard to divorce which remains exactly where it was. I am not at the moment talking about the desirability of divorce or not. For my part it is desirable but it does not arise

[1] Speech in the Legislative Assembly, 15 November 1946. *Legislative Assembly Debates, Official Report*, Vol. VIII, 1946, 12 November 1946–18 November 1946, pp. 1140–1. SWJN,Vol. 1 (II series), pp. 613–14. Excerpts.

[2] Clause 12 of the Bill laid down that on a marriage being registered under the amended Act the previous marriage performed according to local rites, customs and Vedic principles would be deemed as dissolved.

[3] The mover contended that two main object of this Bill were to provide for monogamy and to modify the system of divorce.

here. We are not dealing with divorce in this, and as my Honourable friend Mr. Sri Prakasa said, among Hindus the vast majority do indulge in divorce.[4] We should not think too much about the top-rank Hindus and consider the rest out of the pale. But this measure has nothing to do with divorce. That must be clear. It only enables a couple who may doubt the validity of their marriage to legalize and validate it. Doing so, they do not put an end to their previous marriage or dissolve it—I hope they will not—and no change ought to occur in the status of the children of the previous marriage.[5] They remain under the law under which they had so far remained. I do not understand this question as to what will happen to the children if the second marriage takes place. It is true if there is a civil marriage, the couple then come under the Civil Marriage Act and can, if they so choose, have a divorce. They can do that. That does not affect Hindus generally. If those two persons choose to do so, I do not see why anyone should come in their way.

[4] Sri Prakasa had said that in northern India divorces were most common among the lowest castes of Hindus.

[5] The Bill stipulated that the children born after the date of the civil marriage would be governed by the personal law of succession and those born before it by the general law of succession.

39

The National Anthem[1]

A National Anthem, is of course, a form of words, but it is even more so a tune or a musical score. It is played by orchestras and bands frequently and only very seldom sung. The music of the National Anthem is, therefore, the most important factor. It is to be full of life as well as dignity and it should be capable of being effectively played by orchestras, big and small, and by military bands and pipes. It is to be played not only in India but abroad and should be such as is generally appreciated in both these places. *Jana Gana Mana* appears to satisfy these tests. During the past few months it has been played very often by various orchestras and bands in India and sometimes in foreign countries. Wherever it has been played it has been appreciated. There is no standardized version of it at present, but there are about a dozen slightly varying versions approximating to one another. A.I.R. have got many of these versions recorded and they have broadcast them from time to time. Probably the best present version is the one played by the Patiala State Military Band. The London Philharmonic Society has been asked to render *Jana Gana Mana* in three ways: full orchestra, string orchestra and military band. The London Philharmonic is one of the finest institutions of its kind and they are likely to produce something that is good. In order that it may not become too western in conception an expert Indian musician is advising them. It should be possible for us to evolve a standardized version so far as the music is concerned.

Normally the Anthem is played for about 45 seconds or at the most a minute. It is this short playing that has to be prepared and the essential features of the tune are to be brought within that compass.

Vande Mataram for all its beauty and history is not an easy tune for orchestral or band rendering. It is rather plaintive and mournful and repetitive. It is particularly difficult for foreigners to appreciate it as a piece of music. It has not got those peculiar distinctive features which *Jana Gana Mana* has. It represents very truthfully the period of our struggle in longing and not so much the fulfilment thereof in the future.

As regards the language and words they should obviously be fairly simple. The language of *Vande Mataram* is very difficult for the average person.

[1] To Chief Ministers, 21 May 1948. SWJN, Vol. 6 (II series), p. 278. Excerpts.

Jana Gana Mana is simpler though it is capable of improvement and some changes are necessary in the present context. An attempt can be made to simplify the language and make it more suitable for our use today. But for the present words and language are less important than the music and the tune.

40

The Conquest of the Air[1]

This city is one of the very few of the oldest cities of the world—not this present city, but this site, where cities have existed from immemorial times. I wondered how many changes it had seen and what its position would be now, in this era of not only air travel but something more—of man gradually entering into the third dimension and trying to control it and utilize it both for good and for evil. . . .

Everybody's imagination is fired by this major development in the history of mankind—this conquest of the air.

I am not sure myself yet whether in the ultimate analysis it is going to be good for mankind or bad. Just as every great invention can be used for good ends or evil ends, science which is the greatest thing in human history, the development of science which has advanced humanity so tremendously, has also been used for very evil purposes. But that is not the fault of science. That is the fault of the human being who uses it for evil purposes, and that is another question.

Now, I think, possibly if we look at history in long perspective, the fact of this conquest of the air will stand out as one of the really big events changing human history. I just referred to the third dimension. It is a major event that the human being crawling about on the surface of the earth, more or less in a two-dimensional way, suddenly leaps up to the third dimension. Whether his mind leapt up to it or not, I am not sure; if it had, then all would be well, but somehow events go faster than men's minds and there is such a tremendous lag. We get the wherewithal to do things. We accomplish all manner of great deeds, and yet we do not have the wisdom to know how to do them well. We may have the technical knowledge to do them, but not the wise man's knowledge of how to do them well and properly for the good of mankind. That subject is one for philosophers and not so much for this conference. Nevertheless, it is good to bear that in mind, because technical excellence, important as it is, has to be allied to some other kind of mental quality if it is to be used for proper ends.

[1] Speech at the South-east Asia Regional Air Navigation Meeting, New Delhi, 23 November 1948. JN Papers, NMML. Excerpts.

41

The Message of the Buddha[1]

The message of Buddha had swayed the minds of millions of men and women throughout the civilized world and had brought to mankind a message of peace and goodwill. It almost appeared an irony of fate that while Buddhism as a religion extended its force and influence far and wide, it ceased to be a dominant religion in the land of its birth. This, however, was true that although, comparatively speaking, a very small proportion of the Indian people practised Buddhist religion, the message of Gautama Buddha's teachings and the call that he and his disciples gave to the people to observe the right canons of conduct and thought deeply permeated the minds of his countrymen and underwent a slow but steady process of assimilation through successive periods of Indian history and civilization. Even at the present day, India is looked upon by many neighbouring countries with feelings of affection and veneration as having been the land of birth and the scene of activities of Gautama Buddha. Buddhism more than anything else laid the foundation of Greater India and established cultural unity of an abiding value between India and many parts of Asia. A free India can worthily strengthen and revitalize those contacts.

We have attained our political freedom mainly through the efforts of one who, though not a Buddhist by religion, could claim by virtue of his words and deeds to be one of the noblest inheritors of the teachings of Gautama Buddha. Mahatma Gandhi displayed by his life's work not only his individual goodness and greatness, but was a symbol of the best that India could give to the world. No doubt, our political freedom must be followed by well-balanced economic prosperity, for no nation can live and grow in a continual atmosphere of want, disease and poverty. But let us not forget that neither the future of India nor the future of the world can ever rest on mere material progress. How many of those in whose hands the destiny of nations lies or others, who follow them, feel really informed and inspired by that spiritual quest which made India's great sages and masters truly immortal? The human spirit today is everywhere in anguish and torment. Man has ceased to have respect for these basic human values which India treasured above everything else and which alone form the keystone of human civilization.

[1] Speech at Calcutta, 14 January 1949. From *The Hindustan Standard*, 15 January and *The Calcutta Municipal Gazette*, special supplement, 22 January 1949. Excerpts.

If India is to attain her greatness again, if she has to serve not only her own people, but also to contribute to the well-being of humanity at large, she must unlock her rich treasure-house of knowledge and learning which were the true characteristic of India's catholicity and breadth of vision. We must not only encourage the selected few who are competent to penetrate into and unfold their mysteries but also make India's message available to the masses of the people, leading to their moral and spiritual uplift and enlightenment.

India has demonstrated through the ages that not by strife and conflict but by correct understanding and assimilation of diverse faiths and dogmas—not by hatred and violence but by love and goodwill—mankind can find the path towards peace and freedom. We invoke today the blessings of Gautama Buddha on this ancient land of ours, now freed from foreign domination. Let India know herself truly and well, let internal conflicts cease during the difficult period of transition and let us have the faith and courage to march in a spirit of dauntlessness, undeterred by obstacles and fears, towards the attainment of our cherished goal. Let the spirit of Buddha bless us all, bless this country and the world, and fill our hearts with wisdom.

42

Time and World are Ever in Flight[1]

New Delhi, 2 September 1949

My dear Premier,

"Time and the world are ever in flight"[2] and we try vainly to keep up with them. Events follow each other relentlessly and problem piles upon problem. Sometimes one feels a little dispirited at being the slave, to a large extent, of events and external occurrences which should easily be controlled; at other times one has a certain feeling of excitement and exhilaration at having to wrestle with difficulties and in trying to overcome them with more or less success. Much depends upon the temperament of the individual or the mood of the moment. Great difficulties and perils often draw out an individual and a nation and the very hour of peril becomes the moment of victory. Smaller difficulties and obstructions usually embarrass much more and even produce occasionally a sense of frustration. It is not perhaps the problem or the difficulty that counts so much as the mental approach to it. There are occasions when a whole nation rises to heights of endeavour and performs miracles. There are also occasions when a spirit of lassitude creeps over one and paralyses mental and physical activity. We have had a long history and uncounted centuries lie behind us, having shaped us for what we are. During this vast period we have had experience of all these various moods of elation and depression, of high and brave endeavour and of static passivity or something even worse. Even during our lifetime we have experienced all this. When perils have confronted us, we have faced them with a courage and then we have relapsed and allowed events to take their course, often a wrong course. What fate and determinism may have to do with human destiny is a matter for philosophers to argue. But men and women who have ideals and objectives before them and the urge to achieve them, do not wait for the turn of fortune's wheel. Nor do they seek anchorage in some kind of security which eludes them, as in a rapidly changing world it must. They try

[1] To Chief Ministers, File No. 25(6)-49/PMS. Excerpts.

[2] From 'Into the Twilight', a poem by W.B. Yeats.

to be, to the best of their ability, moulders of destiny and not the pitiful object of an unkind fate.

I am driven to these observations as I sit down to write this fortnightly letter to you and survey both the Indian scene and the world scene. What a mess the world is in and India, and yet everywhere one sees bright points of light, men and women of integrity and purpose and strength of will who are out to achieve some great purpose. To a casual onlooker the widespread dark patches might seem overwhelming, and yet it is those spots of light that count and each one of us can add to the gloom or to the light. Unhappily most of us spend our time and our energy in looking at others and criticizing them, instead of tending our own little light. It is so easy to emphasize the evil that surrounds us, but in the very act of doing so we add to it. We cannot and must not ignore it, for that would be folly. But while recognizing it, we have to feel strong enough to overcome it. That can only be so, if we hold to some basic ideals and objectives and have faith in them. Any task that is big enough takes a lot of doing; anything that is worthwhile must be achieved by great effort, otherwise it is trivial and of little moment.

In the world today many things are happening and changes and upheavals come daily. In China the Communist armies march rapidly towards Canton, the great city of the south, and it appears that there is nothing to stop them effectively. Probably, in a reasonably short time, some kind of a Central Government will be established by the Chinese Communists and this will control a very great part of China. Hong Kong is likely to continue as a British outpost at least for the present. The island of Formosa also will remain outside the Chinese Communists' domain. There may also be other pockets in the interior. At the Hague the round table conference to decide the fate of Indonesia is being held. On the whole the progress made has not been unsatisfactory, though difficulties crop up at every stage and there are many hurdles to be crossed. At Strasbourg a European Assembly has met slowly groping its way towards some kind of a European confederation. The tension between Russia and Yugoslavia has grown and people have even talked of a conflict that is more than verbal.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

43

Tribals[1]

Generally speaking, I am against any hurried attempt to absorb such areas into[2] what is called the normal administration. Such tribes have a definite culture and way of living of their own and any attempt to break it might well lead to a rapid disintegration of the tribes. They are unused to the so-called civilization and economy of, what are termed, more advanced areas. They cannot easily adjust themselves to the new conditions and so they fall between two stools: having lost the old, they have not got the new. This has been the experience in dealing with tribal and rather primitive people in various parts of the world. New Zealand tried to deal with the Maoris in this way with the result that the Maoris began to die out. Subsequently the policy was changed and the Maoris have begun to make good in many ways. Some of them have adjusted themselves to new conditions and play an important part in the political and other life of New Zealand. Most others preserve their old customs and ways and yet do not come into conflict with the rest.

It is important to remember that these tribal customs and ways, though primitive in a sense, are sometimes more advanced in other ways. They belong to a different type or genre of society and because they belong to a different type, they cannot easily be adjusted. A Harijan may be low in the scale of society in India but, on the whole, he fits in some grade or other and can rise step by step in the same framework of society. Not so the tribal folk who are socially, economically, mentally and psychologically different. The British treated them as anthropological specimens to be kept for museum purposes and not interfered with. That was an extreme way of dealing with the situation which is not desirable, though it had some virtue in it. The other extreme way is to begin to treat them like any other citizen. This sounds democratic and good. But in effect it puts a tremendous burden on them because they are totally unsuited to compete with the acquisitive economy of other regions and other persons who exploit them and oppress them. Therefore, a middle way has to be found.

[1] To Bishnuram Mehdi, 2 February, 1951. File No. 21/1/51–poll. MHA. Excerpts.

[2] Bishnuram Mehdi, Governor of Assam from 1949–50, had written to Jawaharlal Nehru regarding the transfer of the plains portion of the Frontier Tracts.

That middle way should be to interfere as little as possible with their natural way of living and customs, to protect them from the exploitation of others, and at the same time to open out ways of advance to them by educational and other social methods—schools, hospitals, roads, etc. The whole point is that there should be no attempt to break up their social structure and adequate protection should be given to them from aggressive elements in other regions. Thus their land should be protected and such tribal democratic customs that they might have should be allowed to function. They must have a definite sense of not being interfered with and at the same time of help being available.

In other words they should have a considerable measure of autonomy within large limits.

These are general considerations to all primitive folk in India. But such primitive peoples and tribes differ greatly among themselves and therefore the application of these general principles will necessarily vary. My own impression of tribal people generally in Assam is that in some matters they are remarkably developed. They have a kind of primitive but none the less advanced democracy among themselves. They are well disciplined and they are fairly tough. I wish that most of our people in India had that measure of democracy and discipline and toughness. It would be unfortunate if these qualities that the tribal folk in Assam possess are in any way discouraged or suppressed.

The Nagas, again, form a very special section of the tribal people in Assam and their problems are peculiar to themselves. But they too have that internal democracy and sense of discipline and they are probably tougher than the others. They are sensitive and proud and jealous of such freedom as they have. They resent interference with it. Some of them are still in the head-hunting stage. They are very different from the people of the old North West Frontier of India. But, to some extent, they offer the same problems. You will remember that the North West Frontier tribes have, for hundreds of years, given trouble to whatever Government controlled in India. The British, in spite of every effort, could not wholly suppress them and ultimately agreed to a more or less independent belt between what was called the British India and the Durand Line.

I do not wish to carry this comparison far because conditions are very different. Nevertheless, there are similarities, more especially because of the frontiers. We have therefore to be rather careful in our dealings with these people, lest we produce a problem which may pursue us for long years later. I am sure that essentially our approach should be friendly and not coercive. The latter approach will not succeed easily and will be a tremendous burden to India and Assam. We have to win these people over as a whole and make them feel that we are not interfering with them, but only trying to help them, where they want help.

44

Journalism[1]

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Editors and Friends,

I feel at home here among you, because, apart from the fact that many of you are friends, I have been often enough on the fringe of the newspaper world and so I have sometimes felt that I was entitled to call myself, to some extent, a newspaperman. . . .

I feel sometimes that I am growing old. It is an uncomfortable feeling, and one of the signs of old age is that one does not approve of or like some of the new things. We become rather conservative, and any development seems to signify some kind of degradation to those who are getting on in years.

Now, I should like to give you one example. I just cannot make out why people see anything amusing in what are called comic strips. I cannot stand them for an instant and, mind you, it is not for lack of time. I read them, and I am supposed to laugh; instead, I feel very gloomy after I have read them. They represent a new development from overseas which our newspapers are taking to. And I suppose they pay good money for it, but, as far as I am concerned, I would even pay money to escape from them if I could.

That is an odd instance, but this flashy type of journalism rather oppresses me. It does not matter, but it might matter very much if I, in my conservatism, if you like to call it that, or old age, drew people's attention to wrong things or educated men in the wrong ways. It is a platitude to talk about the great opportunities and power the newspapers and the press have in the modern world. That power—wherever there is power—can be exercised in the right way or in the wrong way. . . .

For my part I do think that basically it is dangerous to suppress thought and the expression of thought in any way, because this may, besides suppressing a particular good thing, produce many kinds of evil which stunt the growth of a social group.

Believing this, I come up constantly against instances where this freedom of expression is utilized, not merely to express the wrong thing, but to produce a mental climate which, I think, is not good, and which lowers standards of

[1] Address to the All-India Newspaper Editors' Conference, New Delhi, 17 September 1952. AIR tapes, NMML. Excerpts.

every type, whether they are cultural standards, or other standards. When this kind of thing is done on a large scale, and done from day to day, I am worried though not for political reasons; I think in terms of the wider implications of the word 'culture', and of the increase and propagation of vulgarity which surely cannot be a good thing. I do not even say that we should suppress vulgarity; perhaps a little vulgarity is good occasionally. Nevertheless, if the mental climate encourages vulgarity, I doubt if anyone can consider it good. What is one to do in circumstances where one comes across what I call, from the cultural point of view, a rather vulgar and indecent approach? What is one to do about it? One can meet it with the right approach in the hope that right will win in the end. When you are up against a mental climate, which encourages the things an immature mind likes, then you do not get a chance to mature or grow up.

You talk about the freedom of the press. What exactly is the press? Can a person bring out a sheet with the liberty simply to say and do every kind of wrong thing, under the aegis of the noble doctrine of the freedom of the press? Obviously, anybody can bring out anything; the only limitation can be that of money or the number of purchasers he will get. But he can do a lot of mischief by propagating all kinds of pernicious ideas. I am not thinking in terms of politics. Suppose some noted gangster started preaching gangsterism, not patently and obviously, but in a disguised way. Well, then the freedom of the press would mean the preaching of gangsterism or preaching of hatred of others, which is common enough in many countries. It may be that, if you have hatred in your mind, perhaps, it is better to have it out instead of nursing it; but to preach it from day to day to immature minds, surely, cannot be good.

Again what exactly is the press? Whatever it may be, the money involved, and the proprietor of that paper are major factors. Does the freedom of the press ultimately mean the freedom of the rich man to do what he likes with his money through the press? A poor man or the man with inadequate means, whether he is good or bad, will not have much of an opportunity to express himself except in a very limited and small way. He may be good or brilliant, but the person who gets the opportunity nowadays is the person with means; he can run newspapers, buy them or stop them, employ people whom he likes and dismiss people whom he dislikes.

So, it may be that the freedom of the press means not so much freedom of the writer to write what he wills, but rather of the owner of a newspaper to see that the writer writes something that he wants him to write. A great newspaper, while it is a very powerful organ, is, at the same time, a very, very expensive undertaking financially. Normally speaking, high standards and high intelligence are not allied with large quantities of money. The person with a large amount of money need not necessarily have high cultural standards or high literary standards or any high standards at all, though he may have the knack of making money. Therefore, the freedom of the press may come to mean

the freedom of the persons who have a knack of making money and that, after all, is not such a noble thing. I think of all these difficulties and wonder how we can have real freedom of the press . . .

To some extent, politicians and newspapermen have much in common. Both presume to talk too much, write too much, to deliver homilies; both, generally speaking, require no qualifications at all for their job. I do not mean to say that no politician or newspaperman has any qualifications. My point is that for any profession—medicine, engineering or any other—a person has got to go through a long course of training. He must obtain his diploma and degree; only then is he allowed to practise. Not so the politician, and the newspaperman. If he has a certain gift of expression, he gets going; whether or not there is any content behind that expression is immaterial. In fact, sometimes he gets going simply because he has the gift or the knack of abusing, just as some people have the knack of making money. . . .

The obvious thing is that there should be self-discipline, not only at the group level or at the journalists' or newspapermen's level, but in your organization and in the other organizations. Where there is no self-discipline, another kind of discipline has to be imposed. No society will tolerate utter lack of discipline for long, because it leads to chaotic conditions, whether they occur in a big way or in a small way, since chaotic conditions cannot be tolerated. There must be discipline. This discipline may be self-discipline or to some extent both. You may define democracy in a hundred ways, but surely one of its definitions is self-discipline of the community. The less the imposed discipline, and the more the self-discipline, the higher the development of democracy.

Now, apply that to newspapers. When the newspaper is in an undeveloped state in a country, there has to be more of imposed discipline, but it does not fit in with the democratic way of life and it should not be unduly encouraged. But there cannot be a vacuum. Unless self-discipline develops or standards grow, some kind of standard has to be imposed. . . .

I find that newspapers deal only with limited topics in a very limited way. Their horizon is narrow. Somebody said that the adventures of innocence are not worth recording. That is true; and so the wrong things have to be blazoned out, giving people the impression that there is much more of the wrong things than there really is. That unfortunately is one of the bad things that the newspapers have brought us—they blazon out to the world the wrong things that happen simply because these things are exciting and, therefore, interesting. There is no remedy for that, except to try and lay stress on the constructive aspect of the other problems.

In international politics, our newspapers give publicity to conflicts, denigrations or denunciations of persons or countries. Occasionally, denunciation may be good. I do not wish to rule it out. But when life is a string of denunciations, it becomes a little unbalanced and overdone. It is difficult to get at the

truth, as it is to hear anything if everybody is shrieking at the top of his voice. Nowadays, there is far too much shrieking, and one cannot understand what is being said. Newspapers naturally give more publicity to denunciations and the like than to the normal activities of vast numbers of human beings. Thus, we get an unbalanced view of the world.

I do not know how we can balance it. I am only posing to you some difficulties and problems that trouble me from time to time because, as I told you, I get the impression at times that I am getting old, and the sign of old age is that I begin to philosophize and ponder over problems which should not be my concern at all. Normally, a politician or a newspaperman has few lucid moments, because he functions from day to day, hour to hour, minute to minute. He does not have time to think. He has to deal with the particular piece of news or give a particular opinion, or a certain decision from hour to hour. That is the fault of our present-day civilization. Not only newspapermen and politicians but others, too, are gradually being drawn into the whirlpool of incessant activity without thinking.

What this will lead to, I do not quite know. I suppose it is an inevitable development of technological improvements and advancement, which rushes along at a headlong pace, far faster than the average human mind can. With the result that we get entangled in the strings of thought. It is said of Erasmus that his entire library consisted of fifty books, yet he was supposed to be one of the wisest men of the age.

Nowadays, I do not know how many books we read. Newspapers, periodicals and magazines we wade through and forget soon after reading them. If we do read books, we read them hurriedly. Obviously nobody can sit down and read newspapers as one reads a book. Therefore, we apply the newspaper habit of reading to books with the result that our minds sometimes function with alertness, but hardly ever with depth. We may be clever. We may say amusing or witty things and be pleased with ourselves, but there is little depth of thought behind it. I do not know why I am telling you all this. It appears to me to be an inevitable development of the pace at which the world lives today.

To put it differently, the machine grows. I am not against the machine at all. I admire the machine very greatly. The machine grows and grows till it becomes almost human. It begins to think—gives answers to questions. The machine becomes human and the human being appears to become more and more of a machine. After all the machine has emerged from the human mind. Whether it is because of political authoritarianism or economic conditions, or just because of hunger, degradation or technological improvements—whatever the reason may be—if the human mind loses its creative faculty and becomes more and more like a machine then surely it is a tragedy for humanity. If that happens the roots of culture and civilization will gradually dry up. It may revive itself; civilization may have some kind of reincarnation. Anything might

happen. But the present stage of transition characterized by hurried pace of living and still more hurried decisions, with no leisure, and no opportunity or time for cool and calm thinking, cannot by itself be a satisfactory phase. It may be because of this that we don't think quite so much, and are faced with difficulties all the time.

If we cannot think for ourselves, how are we to know what others are thinking? Surely, in order to understand a problem, it is necessary to try to know what others are thinking . . . Difficult as it is, it becomes even more so when we hardly know how our own mind is working. So, our thinking becomes a series of reactions and urges to stimuli. That is not thinking. Of course, in a large measure, our thoughts are determined by all kinds of circumstances. We do not have much control over them. Even so, I suppose there must be some freedom, otherwise our thoughts would merely be mechanical reactions to immediate events and things said, done or written. That would be unfortunate enough even in the case of an individual or a group, but when the fate of a country or of the world depends upon these rapid reactions, then one becomes apprehensive about the future. One may, of course, have an infinite faith in humanity surviving every disaster. But, apart from faith, it is a little dangerous for the world's destinies to be governed by sudden and immediate reactions to events.

How far do the newspapers represent such reactions? They function in a difficult atmosphere. They have to say something quickly and they have not much time to think. Nevertheless, if a newspaper is hostile to a person and has to react to what he says, it will not react to what he says; this is what normally happens. If you dislike a country, you react against that country. Not against what has been said by that country, by that individual, or by that group. If the newspapers do that, then, of course, they are not functioning satisfactorily. They are not functioning maturely or wisely. Of course, it is hardly appropriate to use the word 'wise' in connection with newspapers, but there is no reason why newspapers should not have some amount of leisured thinking and wisdom—if not always—in the leading articles at least.

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Ostentation and Taste[1]

My dear Chief Minister,

I referred at the beginning of this letter to my visit to Sevagram. I had gone there after three years and I was moved by this visit to many places which were so closely bound up in my mind with Gandhiji and with our past work. I went there, more particularly, to attend a Basic Education Conference held by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh. The first thing that struck me was the simplicity of the arrangements for a conference of about one thousand delegates. These delegates were provided board and lodging and a special pandal had been erected for the conference itself. All this was done with extreme simplicity and artistry, and the expenditure on it was very little. The pandal was a bamboo structure with a covering of leaves, etc. I was told that the entire cost of the conference, including board and lodging, was about rupees seven thousand or less. The conference lasted three days. This money was realized in the form of registration fees of rupees two from each delegate and one rupee and eight annas each per day for food tickèts. There was no deficit and there was no special collection of funds from Government or the public for this conference. I compared this to our other arrangements for conferences in Delhi or elsewhere and the heavy expenditure incurred on them. It is true that we cannot duplicate the conditions at Sevagram elsewhere. Nevertheless, the gap was a very big one and I felt that we should learn much from the way things are done at Sevagram.

Whether in Delhi or in other parts of India or whether we go abroad, there is, perhaps naturally, a tendency for us to copy the way other countries manage their functions. In particular, our foreign Missions have to conform to certain standards laid down previously by diplomatic custom and procedure. To some extent we have to do that and it is right and proper that we should maintain the dignity of India wherever we might function. But dignity does not come from lavish display. It comes from taste and artistry and the personality behind all this. We have no desire to compete with other countries in ostentation or display.

We are a poor country and we must always avoid any unnecessary or wasteful expenditure, remembering that it is at the cost of the millions of our

[1] To Chief Ministers, 20 November 1952. SWJN, Vol. 20 (II Series), pp. 555–6. Excerpts.

people in India. But, apart from the money involved, there is the question of taste and it does not appear fitting to me that some of us should function in a way which is so utterly removed from conditions in India. It is our purpose to lessen these differences and bridge the gap that separates one class from another in India . . .

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

46

The Ascent of Everest[1]

My dear Chief Minister,

The final ascent of Everest has been a great achievement in which all of us should take pride. Here again there has been pettiness and the narrowest type of nationalism shown by some people. Controversies have arisen as to whether Tenzing got there first or Hillary and whether Tenzing is an Indian national or a Nepalese national.[2] I was amazed to learn of these disputes and the excitement shown over them. It does not make the slightest difference to anybody whether Tenzing first reached the top or Hillary. Neither could have done so without the help of the other. Indeed, both of them could not have done so without the help of the whole party, and if I may take this idea a little further, the whole party could not have done so without the accumulated experience, labour and sacrifice of all their predecessors who tried to reach the top of Everest. Great human achievements are always the result of combined endeavours in which numerous people take part. It may be that one person takes the last step, but the other persons also count and should not be forgotten. For us to show a narrow and deplorable nationalism in such matters is not to add to the credit of our country but to lead people to think that we are petty in outlook and suffering from some kind of inferiority complex.

I have had the pleasure of meeting the Everest party and, in particular. Tenzing. Tenzing is a fine man. But I greatly fear that the uncontrolled adulation that has been thrust upon him might well spoil him and make him unfit for any great work in the future. I hope he will survive it. To honour him and praise him is right but to show an uncontrollable excitement and try to make this as if it was some national achievement only is not becoming for us.

I venture to write to you this because I have been watching, with restrained pride and pleasure as well as ever-growing sense of responsibility and humility, the growth of India's prestige in the world. It is not for us to talk about this and I have deliberately not attempted to praise India or to say much about any success that she may achieved in her policy. That praise will remain locked up in my mind and heart and will give me strength for greater effort in the cause of the country we hold dear. Why should we talk of this to others? It is for others

[1] To Chief Ministers, 2 July 1953. File No. 25(6)/53-PMS. Excerpts.

[2] On 24 June, 1953, Tenzing stated that he was an Indian citizen.

to do so, if they so choose. Facts are more important than praise or blame, and facts are compelling the world to give a new status and position to India in the larger scheme of things. But this, though pleasing, is also a little terrifying; for it brings tremendous responsibilities in its train. Are we, with all our petty controversies about linguistic provinces and communal agitations and casteism and Tenzing and Hillary, quite big enough to shoulder these responsibilities which are coming to us so swiftly and extensively? It is well that we think of this in all humility of spirit.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

47

The Employment of Communists[1]

New Delhi, 23 May 1954

My dear Kailas Nath,

A large number of young men and women are or pretend to be communists, and yet, many of them settle down to very staid and sober activities as they grow older and forget about their communism. Sometimes, even confirmed communists change their views and even become aggressive anti-communists. To make it difficult for them to change might well be to encourage them to remain communists. To lose a really competent and skilled person in this way would be a peculiar loss.

Therefore, in deciding this matter, one has to consider the confidential nature of the work and at the same time the kind of man a person is. A policy report gives us some factual data which helps, but it does not tell us what the man is like. I have received police reports about men I have known intimately. I felt I was in a far better position to decide about them than the person who wrote the report, even though the report might contain correct facts.

A professor in a college or a university or a teacher in a school should not normally proceed in regard to the young men in his charge, except in special cases, on the basis of police reports. He has to judge from his own personal knowledge of the individual and try to improve him. This applies to any research institute where young men work. . . . The persons engaged there usually possess special ability. They are the kind of men or women who count in a country and it would be a great pity if no opportunity was given to them to do their specialized work and engage their minds thereby and thus to force them to become completely frustrated and perhaps subversive. There may be a slight risk, but the risk is there anyway. Ultimately the man who knows them best has to judge, always taking care that no opportunity for any mischievous activity is given. We can hardly dub a young man for ever as dangerous and not give him an opportunity to divert his mind and activities into better channels.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

[1] To Kailas Nath Katju, JN Collection, NMML. Excerpts.

48

Floods[1]

The fact to be remembered, therefore, is that these floods are due not to local rainfall, but to heavy rains in the depth of the Himalayas, which come down suddenly and with little warning through the numerous tributaries of the Ganga and the Brahmaputra to the plains below.

Another fact to be borne in mind is that floods are natural and normal occurrences and are beneficial in the long run. They have, no doubt, occurred at periodic intervals for hundreds of thousands of years. In fact, it may be said that the rich and fertile soil of Bihar and Assam and elsewhere, has been built up by these floods and renovated by them from time to time. These floods are not a rare or harmful phenomena but to be welcomed, if only the damage done by them is prevented or much lessened. If we take this long view and look at things in some perspective we shall not get needlessly alarmed as if some terrible catastrophe has happened. Unfortunately, there are local catastrophies and much human misery has been caused and we must not only give relief but prevent this from happening in future, in so far as we can. But we cannot do so by trying to stop the normal working of natural forces, or by doing something which might change the whole nature of the river system and thus bring unforeseen consequences in its train.

There is one aspect of these floods which is perhaps somewhat unusual and this affects the Brahmaputra. Possibly the great earthquake of some years ago has changed the terrain and the levels of the land and thus affected the river system of that area and possibly given a slight tilt to the bed of the Brahmaputra. Also, the earthquake must have brought down a great deal of debris in the high mountains and this comes down during the floods. One of the major difficulties has been the lack of knowledge in regard to the contours of the land. This applies not only to Assam, but even to Bihar, Bengal and other areas. Also our complete lack of knowledge of the terrain and the higher regions of many of these rivers in Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan. Any planned approach to this problem must include some knowledge of the entire river system.

[1] Statement to the Press, 7 September, 1954. External Affairs (PIB) 1954. Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi. Excerpts.

It is intended, therefore, to set up two major River Valley Commissions; one for the Ganga and the other for the Brahmputra. In addition, it is proposed to have a Central Board supervising and coordinating the work of these Commissions. These Commissions will have to collect all possible information about the past and the present and formulate major schemes dealing with these floods, in such a way as to prevent disasters and undue suffering in the future and yet not to interfere with the normal working of natural forces and the good that these floods do to the land. This will be a relatively long distance approach. In addition to this, there has to be an immediate approach to prevent as far as possible any great damage during the next rainy season, that is, something has to be done in the course of the next eight or nine months. That can only be partial, but it should be able to help. That partial effort should be a part of the major effort that is envisaged. Immediate steps are being taken to this end.

In both the partial effort and the long-term one, the full cooperation of the people living in these areas is absolutely essential. I have no doubt that with proper engineering advice, fuller information and this combination of government and popular effort much can be done.

Some of our newspapers give rather sensational accounts of these floods, and more especially of Dibrugarh. What has happened is big enough and sometimes on a colossal scale. There is no need to exaggerate. What impressed me greatly was the general attitude of the people both in Bihar and Assam, where I spent some time. That attitude was not of pessimism except for some people who had suffered themselves. The whole approach was a constructive approach. Indeed, the sturdy peasantry of Bihar made it clear on many occasions that they wanted no doles. They want us to fight the flood menance and to join in the fight themselves.

We have thus to face this situation calmly, with deliberation and at the same time with a sense of urgency. The rest of India can help with contributions in money and kind. It should be remembered that the need is great and affects millions of people. Governments, both the state and at the Centre, will assist in every way to the best of their ability as, indeed, they are doing.

Rather alarming news has been spread about Dibrugarh. It is true that there was something frightening about this mighty river, the Brahmaputra, rushing along in its proud strength and carrying away much in its sweep. To see great trees being pulled by it as if they were match-wood and houses gradually being dissolved in the Brahmaputra was not a pleasant sight. And yet we must not exaggerate. Dibrugarh, I am sure, will continue, though a small part of it might be swept away. Probably after this month of September we shall have some relief and some time to think and take action for the future.

The Ganga and the Brahmaputra have been, through immemorial ages, the makers of a great part of India. They are our noblest rivers and we should make

friends with them and use their waters and the silt they bring, in the future as in the past, to give life to our soil. At the same time we have to protect ourselves from some of their pranks and destructive energy. We can do that, I think, if we approach this calmly and with strength and determination.

49

Planning for Delhi[1]

Some time ago the Cabinet decided in favour of the setting up of a Central Authority for Planning for Delhi City, including both Old and New Delhi. Although this decision was made some months ago, no progress has been made and it appears that nothing will be done for another few months. It is now suggested that pending the establishment of this Authority, some legislative measure should be passed immediately checking the uncontrolled building operations that are taking place in all sides of this rapidly growing city.

Sometimes when I go to the suburbs of New or Old Delhi, I am amazed at the unplanned way in which buildings are being put up. Delhi is a great city and it will undoubtedly grow in the future. It is essential, therefore, that we should think about this future and not allow this haphazard growth, which will come in our way in the future.

I am told, though I have not seen it, that the Lodi Gardens which were so attractive, are partially ruined now by constructions. In the open space between the Red Fort and the main city proper, constructions have been made limiting this open space. Many of these constructions are on behalf of the Government. I tried to stop this encroachment on a very precious open area of Delhi but I confess that I failed.

Multi-storeyed Government offices and other buildings are being put up in Delhi. But, as far as I can see, little regard has been paid to the width of road in front of them. The old roads in New Delhi were made at a time when there was hardly any traffic and the houses were single-storeyed houses. Obviously when multi-storeyed houses go up, traffic increases greatly and the old narrow roads are totally inadequate.

There are many other considerations of grace and beauty in a city which have to be borne in mind. But the immediate necessities are to prevent open spaces being encroached upon, to think of broad roads and to have the usual amenities which a modern city should provide.

There are so many authorities in Delhi that I do not even know their number. They all overlap each other and it is exceedingly difficult to get anything done. It was for this reason that one Authority was proposed and accepted in

[1] File No. PC/CDN/1/1/56, Planning Commission, Coordination Branch.

principle. I do hope that very early effect will be given to this and, to begin with something will be done to prevent constructions going up without careful consideration.

The Health Minister has sent me a scheme for some kind of a National Park in Delhi which should not be built over. This includes Rajghat and all the land up to the Jumna and roundabout; also the Red Fort and the land in front of it right up to the city. The idea seems to me an attractive one and worthy of consideration.

In this note no particular suggestion or proposal is put forward. There are proposals already. All I wish is to draw urgent attention to a matter of vital concern for Delhi.

1 August 1955 Jawaharlal Nehru

50

All India Police Sports Meet[1]

Everybody must recognize the necessity of the Police and the importance of the work they do. Whatever the future and whatever the Government in any country, a Police Force is necessary. But what kind of a Police Force must we have? That is the question which we should always bear in mind. The Police Force of an alien power is an imposition and it can never gain the cooperation of the people. It functions for different aims and serves a government which is basically hostile to the people. Thus, even the obvious social duties of the Police tend to become somewhat diverted to wrong ends.

Under a free and democratic government, the functions of the Police Force must become largely social. It would deal with crimes and public order and would do so in a manner so as to gain the goodwill and cooperation of the public whom it is meant to serve.

Power, it has been said, tends to corrupt and the greater that power, the greater that risk. A Prime Minister faces this risk most. So do too other Ministers or officials of government. So does a policeman. In each case the individual has the great power of government behind it and he has to be very careful not to misuse this power. For this reason, democracy has devised many methods to control individual power and authority and to spread it out as far as possible. It has also encouraged public criticism, even of the highest in the land so that no one should consider himself above the public. Parliament or other legislative assemblies are the guardians of the people's freedom and the proper use of power.

In spite of all these checks and controls, there is still the fact of power being wielded by the individual and the risk of his using it in the wrong way. The only additional remedy is for the individual himself to exercise self-control and self-discipline. This self-control and self-discipline is the measure of the greatness of a nation or an individual. It is the weak and those who lack self-control who try to show their strength or impose their authority by shouting and improper behaviour.

This applies to the person in authority as well as to those on whom authority is exercised. It applies to the official and the policeman on the one hand as

[1] 31 January 1956. Message to the 6th All India Police Sports Meet, held at Gwalior from February 1, 1956. External Affairs (PIB) 1956, Shastri Bhavan. Excerpts.

well as to the public on the other. Both have to learn the lesson of self–control and cooperation. Those who blame the Police incessantly are not acting rightly and their criticism loses weight. The policeman who forgets that his main duty is to serve the people and not to exercise authority over them, is also acting wrongly. Thus, there is the dual responsibility.

Every policeman is a citizen and thus a member of the wider public. Every citizen bears some responsibility for the maintenance of good order and social harmony. The two functions overlap.

51

The Equation of Defence[1]

What is the equation of defence? In what lies the strength of a people for defence? Well, one thinks immediately about defence forces—army, navy, air force. Perfectly right. They are the spear-points of defence. They have to bear the brunt of any attack. How do they exist? What are they based on? The more technical armies and navies and air forces get, the more important becomes the industrial and technological base of the country. You may import a machine or an aircraft or some other highly technical weapon and you may even teach somebody to use it, but that is a very superficial type of defence because you have not got the technological background for it. If spare parts go wrong, your whole machine is useless. If somebody from whom you bought it refuses to supply a part of it, it becomes useless, so that in spite of your independence you become dependent on others, and very greatly so.

From that point of view probably there are very few countries in the world that are really independent, able to stand on their own feet against the military strength of others. Therefore, apart from the army, navy and so on, you have to have an industrial and technological background in the country.

Supporting all this is the economy of the country. If the country's economy is not sound, it is a weak country. . . .

The equation of defence is your defence forces plus your industrial and technological background, plus thirdly, the economy of the country, and fourthly, the spirit of the people.

[1] Speech in the Lok Sabha, 21 March 1956. JN Papers, NMML. Excerpt.

52

Wildlife[1]

Wildlife? That is how we refer to the magnificent animals of our jungles and to the beautiful birds that brighten our lives. I wonder sometimes what these animals and birds think of man and how they would describe him if they had the capacity to do so. I rather doubt if their description would be very complimentary to men. In spite of our culture and civilization, in many ways man continues to be not only wild but more dangerous than any of the so-called wild animals.

Nature is said to be red in tooth and claw and life is precarious in the forest. The strong prey on the weak and the weak develop subterfuges and camouflages to protect themselves. But this eternal way of the forest is due principally to the quest for food. Man does not eat man, but he kills him for other purposes and even where he does not kill the body, he kills the spirit.

We are strange mixtures of good and evil, of civilization and barbarism, of the divine and the base. We talk in one language and act in another way. We hold aloft noble ideals and shout many slogans, but in our behaviour we belie them. We talk of peace and our manner of doing so is often aggressive and warlike.

In India, perhaps even more than in other countries, there is this difference between precept and practice. In no country is life valued in theory so much as in India, and many people would even hesitate to destroy the meanest or the most harmful of animals. But in practice we ignore the animal world.

We grow excited about the protection of the cow. The cow is one of the treasures of India and should be protected. But we imagine that we have done our duty by passing some legislation. This results not in the protection of the cow but much harm to it as well as to human beings. Cattle are let loose and become wild and become a danger not only to crops but to human beings. They deteriorate and the very purpose for which we value the cow is defeated.

In many other countries, even children take great interest in animals and birds. There are innumerable books on the animal world and many people take arduous journeys to see some rare bird. Societies of bird watchers are formed, not to kill them but to see and study them.

[1] Message, 16 September 1956. Prime Minister's Office, File No. 9/2/56-PMP, Sr. No. 61-A. JN Papers, NMML.

How many of our people know even the names of the less common birds? How few books we have about birds and animals.

I welcome this new interest in India in the preservation of wildlife. I cannot say that we should preserve that form of wildlife which is a danger in our civilized haunts or which destroys our crops. But life would become very dull and colourless if we did not have these magnificent animals and birds to look at and to play with. We should, therefore, encourage as many sanctuaries as possible for the preservation of what yet remains of our wildlife.

Our forests are essential for us from many points of view. Let us preserve them. As it is, we have destroyed them far too much. It is true that as population grows, the need for greater food production becomes necessary. But this should be by more intensive cultivation and not by the destruction of the forests which play a vital part in the nation's economy.

Jawaharlal Nehru

53

Tribal Affairs[1]

Some four or five months ago, Dr. Verrier Elwin sent me a typescript of this small book and suggested that I might write a foreword to it. It was easy enough to write a few lines, but I did not wish to do so before I had read the typescript. I would have been in any event interested in reading it as the challenge to us from the North-East Frontier Agency fascinates me. I was fully occupied with various activities at the time, and so I put this typescript aside for a leisure hour or two. That leisure did not come. A few days ago there was a gentle reminder from Verrier Elwin and I felt a little ashamed at having kept him waiting for all this time. And so, in spite of numerous other activities and engagements, including election work, I have read through this very interesting little book.

Verrier Elwin has done me the honour of saying that he is a missionary of my views on tribal affairs. As a matter of fact, I have learnt much from him, for he is both an expert on this subject with great experience and a friend of the tribal folk. I have little experience of tribal life and my own views, vague as they were, have developed under the impact of certain circumstances and of Verrier Elwin's own writings. It would, therefore, be more correct to say that I have learnt from him rather than that I have influenced him in any way.

I came across the tribal people first, rather distantly, in various parts of India other than the North-East Frontier. These tribes were the Gonds, the Santals and the Bhils. I was attracted to them and liked them and I had a feeling that we should help them to grow in their own way.

Later, I came in touch with the tribal people of the North-East Frontier of India, more especially of the Hill Districts of Assam. My liking for them grew and with it came respect. I had no feeling of superiority over them. My ideas were not clear at all, but I felt that we should avoid two extreme courses: one was to treat them as anthropological specimens for study and the other was to allow them to be engulfed by the masses of Indian humanity. These reactions were instinctive and not based on any knowledge or experience. Later, in considering various aspects of these problems and in discussing them with those who knew much more than I did, and more especially with Verrier Elwin, more definite ideas took shape in my mind and I began to doubt how far the normal

[1] 16 February 1957. Foreword to *A Philosophy for NEFA*, by Verrier Elwin.

idea of progress was beneficial for these people and, indeed, whether this was progress at all in any real sense of the word. It was true that they could not be left cut off from the world as they were. Political and economic forces impinged upon them and it was not possible or desirable to isolate them. Equally undesirable, it seemed to me, was to allow these forces to function freely and upset their whole life and culture, which had so much of good in them.

The reading of this book has clarified my mind and helped me to have more definite views on the subject. I agree not only with the broad philosophy and approach of Verrier Elwin, but with his specific proposals as to how we should deal with these fellow-countrymen of ours. I hope that our officers and others who have to work with the tribals of NEFA will read carefully what Dr. Elwin has written and absorb this philosophy so that they may act in accordance with it. Indeed, I hope that this broad approach will be applied outside the NEFA also to other tribals in India.

I hope the reading of this book will not be confined to our officers, but that it will have a wider audience. Our people all over India should know more about this problem and should develop affection and respect for these fine people. Above all, I hope there will be no attempt made to impose other ways of life on them in a hurry. Let the changes come gradually and be worked out by the tribals themselves.

It is true that the isolated life that our officers live in some of these tribal areas is a strain on them. But they must remember that the problems they deal with are a challenge to us and that they are privileged to be engaged in this great adventure.

54

Indian Women[1]

There are two views, among others, about Indian women. One is the typical old Indian viewpoint of the Indian woman being a symbol of purity, faithfulness and submission and devotion to her husband. The great symbols are Sita and Savitri. The other view, mostly to be found in some western countries, is that the Indian woman is backward, suppressed and treated almost as a chattel.

Both these views are far from the truth, and deal with some imaginary conceptions little related to life, for life is much more complicated and these simple definitions do not give us much insight into its working. I suppose that none of us can be truly objective in discussing a subject of this kind. In a country like India, with its enormous variety, it is easy to pick up some one aspect here and there and generalize from it. So we can indulge in praise of the woman of India and find many examples to justify our praise. We can also condemn their position in Indian life and also find examples to justify this.

For my part, I am partial to the women of India, and the more I have wandered about this great country the more I have felt a certain pride in our womenfolk.

Women in India have played an important part in our social life and in our history. They have played this part in every branch of national activity, from high learning to valour on the battlefield. But it is their unobtrusive work in the household, in the village or in the larger community, that has moulded the nation.

They are essentially feminine, and that is as it should be. But then I have always felt that India, for all her manly qualities, is specially noted for the feminine virtues—gentleness, tenderness, a certain patient resignation and a quiet and sometimes amazing courage of a somewhat passive kind. I say this realizing that I am generalizing when I should not do so, because there are all kinds of men as well as all kinds of women in this country. But I suppose it is true that the idea of women in India is chiefly connected with these feminine virtues as well as, perhaps, with some feminine failings. . . .

Thousands of years have moulded and conditioned our race. Today we pass rapidly through various phases of transition. That is inevitable and not to

[1] Foreword to *Women of India*, ed. Tara Ali Baig (1958).

be regretted. But I doubt if all these coming changes, big as they are, will uproot us from our old foundations. Someone said about another country words which may be applied to India: 'She lives in her own time, in the rhythm of her own history, which does not quite keep time with the clocks of the twentieth century.'

Yet the twentieth century is upon us, with all its destruction of the old hopes and fears of the future. We live in India simultaneously in almost all the ages and centuries that have preceded this middle of the twentieth century. We are busy coordinating them and trying to fit them into each other, to keep the old roots and to have fresh branches and fruits and flowers in this present-day world of ours. The rhythm of our time is an ever-changing one. The clock ticks on often leaving our thinking and our policies behind.

We talk of revolutions, political and economic. And yet the greatest revolution in a country is the one that affects the status and living conditions of its women. It is in so far as our revolution has affected our women that it is basic. I believe it has done so, not perhaps in a dramatic and aggressive way but rather the old Indian fashion of combining change with continuity. And yet there have been many dramatic phases of this change even in our time.

It was Gandhiji, that wonderful man and great revolutionary, who brought a dramatic change among our women, when at his bidding they came out in large numbers from the shelter of their homes to take their part in the struggle for India's freedom. Once the old shackles were removed, it was no longer possible to replace them in the same way. Attempts were no doubt made to go back, but they were bound to fail.

Now the full impact of modern life is being felt by our womenfolk in the cities chiefly and in our schools and colleges. I do not know what the final outcome will be except that it will be different from the past, though perhaps not so different as to affect the essential characteristics of India's women.

55

Brooms[1]

Dear Chief Minister,

I am writing to you about brooms, the humble broom used by our cleaners and sweepers as well as in our houses. The normal Indian broom can only be used if one bends down to it or even sits when using it. For most household purposes this might not matter much, although even there it is troublesome. A broom or a brush with a long handle, which can be used while a person is standing, is far more effective from the point of view of work and far less tiring to the person using it. So far as I know, all over the world these standing brooms or brushes are used. Why then do we carry on with a primitive, out-of-date, method which is inefficient and psychologically all wrong? Bending down in this way to sweep is physically more tiring and, I suppose, encourages a certain subservience in mind.

But the main consideration is not the individual householder but the large-scale cleaning operations done on behalf of corporations and municipalities. These can undoubtedly be made much more efficient by the use of the long-handed broom or brush. I think that every corporation and municipality must be induced to bring this small, but far-reaching, reform. They can easily supply the long-handled brooms and brushes to their sweepers and cleaners. In addition, every such sweeper or cleaner should be given a proper container with a lid to collect the refuse, etc. It is a disgusting sight for open pans or baskets to be used for this purpose. . . .

I think also that all municipal sweepers and cleaners must have a proper uniform. All this adds to efficiency and cleanliness; and further raises this class in their own and other people's esteem which is important

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

[1] To Chief Ministers, 12 June 1960. JN Papers, NMML. Excerpts.

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